

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

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Nurturing Spiritual Experiences



Church Governance and the Educated Laity



Light in a Time of Darkness



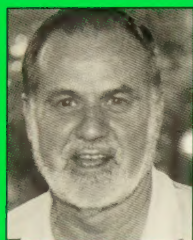
The Changing Family



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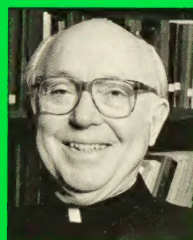
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FOUNDING EDITOR James J. Gill, S.J., M.D., a priest and psychiatrist, died peacefully on July 29, 2003, after a courageous battle with prostate and bone cancer.

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Manuscripts should be submitted to the Executive Editor, Linda Amadeo, either (1) as e-mail attachments in any Windows-based (not Macintosh) word-processing program from 2000 or earlier or (2) by mail (see addresses below). Unaccepted mailed manuscripts will not be returned unless submitted with a stamped, self-addressed return envelope.

Manuscripts are received with the understanding that they have not been previously published and are not currently under consideration elsewhere. Feature articles should be limited to 4,500 words (15 double-spaced pages), with no more than 6 recommended readings; filler items of between 500 and 1,000 words will be considered. All accepted material is subject to editing.

Authors are responsible for the completeness and accuracy of proper names in both text and bibliography. Acknowledgments must be given when substantial material is quoted from other publications. Provide author name(s), title of article, title of journal or book, volume number, page(s), month and year, and publisher's permission to use material.

Letters are welcome and will be published as space permits and at the discretion of the editors. Such communications should not exceed 600 words and are subject to editing.

Book reviews (maximum length: 600 words) should be sent to the Book Review Editor, Sister Brenda Hermann, M.S.B.T., A.C.S.W., at bhermann5@comcast.net. Books for review should be sent to Sr. Hermann at 11529 February Circle, #303, Silver Spring, MD 20904.

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EDITOR'S PAGE

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT Founder James J. Gill, S.J., M.D., 1925-2003

James J. Gill, S.J., M.D., founder of HUMAN DEVELOPMENT, died peacefully on July 29, 2003. A native of San Francisco he entered the Society of Jesus in 1947 after a stint in the U.S. Naval Aviation during World War II. After his ordination in 1957 he received permission to study medicine with a view to becoming a psychiatrist. His studies coincided with the call of Vatican Council II and the *aggiornamento* (updating) called for by Blessed John XXIII. Jim soon saw his calling as a psychiatrist as uniquely placing him to help in this aggiornamento. As a result, as documented in the Spring 2003 issue of HUMAN DEVELOPMENT, he was widely consulted by bishops and religious congregations on issues of formation, government and leadership. A born teacher, he made difficult psychiatric and medical concepts graspable to an audience eager

to learn, but untutored in the sciences involved. More than anything else, people who heard him or consulted him knew that they were in the presence of a man of God who cared for all God's people.

To meet Jim was to meet a man of tremendous compassion and kindness. As Lock Sofield and Linda Amadeo noted in their tributes to Jim in the Spring issue, what made Jim the man he was was his profound faith in God and his deep personal piety expressed in his love of the Eucharist. We will miss his wisdom and his kindness, but we trust that he is at rest with the Lord to whom he gave his life 56 years ago. One of his Jesuit friends wrote that heaven must now be a more peaceful place. May he rest in peace.

(See Father Gill's obituary on inside back cover of this issue.)

STRETCH YOUR IMAGINATION: LISTEN TO DIFFERENT VOICES

Many years ago I had an experience that has swayed how I preach. I was counseling a woman who thought of suicide, turning her anger against herself. As she talked out her feelings, she began to express anger against the one who had betrayed her, and these angry thoughts were murderous in their intensity, only now directed toward the other, not herself. She was actually getting better, and there was no danger that she would act on her murderous rage. One Sunday at church she heard a homily on the injunction of Jesus to leave the gift at the altar and go be reconciled with one's enemy. She was immediately thrown back to her suicidal thoughts: God, it seemed, had turned away from her because she was so mur-

derously angry. The preacher that day was a wonderful priest who was not preaching fire and brimstone; he probably just wanted to preach love of others as the key Christian virtue, but in the case of this woman, the message backfired into self-hatred. Preachers can never know the full stories of the people who hear their homilies, but the more they can come into contact with the reality of the lives of those in the pews, the better they can imagine how people will hear their words and thus tailor what they say so that it has less chance of being misinterpreted.

I thought of this experience as I read a powerful and disturbing book, *Proverbs of Ashes* by two feminist theologians, Rita Nakashima Brock and Rebecca Ann Parker, of Starr King School of Ministry in Berkeley, California. They had both become disenchanted with atonement theories of salvation, theories that, in one way or another, made God the author of the death of Jesus for our salvation. Rebecca had

been a pastor and had seen the havoc wreaked on battered women's lives by such theories. For example, the frontispiece tells the story of Lucia whose husband regularly beat her to the point of broken bones. She told Rebecca: "I went to my priest twenty years ago. I've been trying to follow his advice. The priest said I should rejoice in my sufferings because they bring me closer to Jesus....He said, 'if you love Jesus, accept the beatings and bear them gladly, as Jesus bore the cross.'" Twenty years later Lucia was still being beaten. Rebecca recalled that the Sunday before she had "preached a sermon on the willingness of love to suffer... that love bears all things." Now she knew she had to tell Lucia a different truth and that to do so would mean that she had to rethink her theology. When Rebecca told her that God did not want her to accept beatings from her husband, Lucia exclaimed, "I knew I was right. But it helps to hear you say it."

The authors recount their struggles to overcome traumas suffered in their own upbringing, traumas whose effects were exacerbated by the theology and preaching to which they were exposed and by the silence about the abuse they suffered that seemed required by their religious ethos. As I read the book, I realized that the Church's leaders, preachers, pastoral practitioners and theologians need to hear the voices of those who are often not heard because they have been marginalized or because of the culture of silence that does not want to hear unpleasant stories. Hearing these voices and their stories will expand imaginations, hearts and minds.

A culture of silence kept Rebecca from being able to tell her parents about the sexual abuse she suffered from a neighbor when she was a little child. She was even able to wall the memory off from herself for a long time, but it ate away at her, leading her to attempts at suicide and defeating her hopes for intimacy in marriage. When she was, as an adult, finally able to tell her parents about the abuse, her mother said, "It's so terrible that we didn't see what was happening to you. In those days nobody talked about sexual abuse of children. We didn't imagine that such a thing really happened." We cannot imagine what we have not experienced. Hence, we need to hear the stories of people of all walks of life, especially of those who do not readily find an audience. At least through these stories we will vicariously experience something of what they have experienced and thus be able to imagine more of reality.

Perhaps the crisis of clergy sexual abuse is due, in part, to the failure of Church leaders and parents to imagine that priests could do such unspeakable

things to children and adolescents, as well as being due to the culture of silence that does not want to listen to accounts of such deeds. It is imperative now that all members of the churches hear the voices of those who have been abused not only by priests, ministers and religious, but also by family members and friends. Moreover, only when we hear such stories will we be able to imagine how God is present to such horrors and thus avoid theories that may only make matters worse.

Thanks to Brock and Parker I will be better able to imagine the effect of any words about Jesus' "sacrifice" on those who are the victims of abuse. I needed to hear these women's stories in order to come to a deeper understanding of the mystery that is the life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. Parker tells the story of what happened to her as she imaged, in the presence of her therapist, the scene of her rape as a child and realized there was a Presence there who embraced her and confronted her rapist. "This Presence could not stop the man from killing me, if he chose to. And, at the same time it could stop him. Because, I knew, if he noticed it he would be stopped. He would not be able to continue. You couldn't. It was clear to me. You couldn't be aware of this Presence and do what the man was doing to me. He only could do it by not noticing, not knowing." When I read these words, I felt somehow freed and in the presence of God, as though God were saying to me, "Yes! She's got it. She has experienced and articulated something of what it means to be the Creator of this world where human beings commit awful crimes against the innocent, including my innocent Son."

Parker writes that the religious community (her father was a minister) "could not see violence against children because it could not name clearly the violence that happened to Jesus." She may be right. Perhaps only innocent sufferers of violence can help us to name clearly what happened to Jesus. It was a victim of clergy sexual abuse who helped me to imagine more graphically the horror of the crucifixion. She once told me that she could imagine Jesus being sexually abused prior to his crucifixion, a thought that never entered my head. That possibility brought home in a new way the degradation intended by the Romans when they crucified someone.

It was only when I read the story of the incarnation through the eyes of women (for example, in Elizabeth Johnson's *Truly Our Sister*) that I could imagine the fear, even terror Mary might have experienced as a young betrothed girl about to be found pregnant in a society that advocated stoning such a woman. The mystery of God's call deepens when I

appreciate the possible consequences for Mary of God's request that she become the mother of the Messiah. As a result, I can now better imagine the struggles of women in the Roman Catholic Church who feel called by God to ministry in a Church where they often feel demeaned and unaccepted as equal partners in ministry with men. Like Mary they feel that they are being called to a task that looks only to bring them trouble and conflict and that may be impossible to carry out, at least by any human standards one can imagine.

Church leaders need to attend to the stories of women in the church, and especially those who feel called to ministry, to hear their honest stories without the sugarcoating that women often feel is necessary so that they get any hearing at all. What is it like, for instance, to hear God constantly referred to in masculine terms? If you are male, try reading a bible text or any book on religion and replace every reference to God with a feminine pronoun and adjective. Try to imagine a steady diet of hearing God referred to in this way. Moreover, most often references to a single generic human being use masculine nouns and pronouns. Can we who are men have any idea of how it feels for a woman to read in the Catechism of the Catholic Church sentences like this: "The desire for God is written in the human heart, because *man* is created by God and for God; and God never ceases to draw *man* to *himself*. Only in God will *he* find the truth and happiness *he* never stops searching for" (my italics). If you are male, change all the italicized words to their feminine equivalents and see how you feel. Educated women know that the original English translation used inclusive language; some of them may wonder whether the translation was changed to rub in their faces that they are second-class citizens.

Not long ago, in one diocese, retreat houses were told by the bishop that women retreat directors could not read the gospel or give homilies at Mass. One older nun, a former college professor and well-respected spiritual director with a gentle spirit, told

me, "So I'm unworthy to read the gospel because I'm a woman!" They say that the Catholic Church lost the working class of Europe in the early part of the last century. Is the Church now alienating the very backbone of most church activities by its insensitivity to women and its deafness to their real stories? And it may not just be the women who are beginning to feel the estrangement brought on by the inability of male Church leaders to imagine what real equality in ministry of men and women might look and feel like. One married woman, who feels called to ministry, was asked by her teen-age son: "Why do you keep going back? It's like a woman going back to an abusive relationship." I wonder whether the leaders of the Church might deal more realistically with women if they could actually hear their stories and thus be able to put themselves into their shoes imaginatively.

I believe the Church needs to listen with reverent attention to the stories of all the people of God so that all of us can have a better sense of the great mystery at the heart of creation. If it is true, as John Paul II has said, that the Church breathes with only one lung because of the schism between the Orthodox and the Catholic churches, are we not also imaginatively stunted as long as the stories of God's dealings with so many marginalized members are not heard and utilized in our preaching, pastoral practice and theology?

Bill Barry S.J.

William A. Barry, S.J., Ph.D.
Editor-in-Chief

In a future EDITOR'S PAGE I will take up other marginalized voices that need to be heard.

Church Governance and the Educated Laity

Michael J. Sheeran, S.J.

Kee the Faith, Change the Church” is the motto of Voice of the Faithful, a national lay organization that arose in the Boston Archdiocese in response to the clergy sex-abuse crisis. Voice of the Faithful claims no quarrel with Church doctrine. It affirms that its members come from centrist church-going Catholics who are firmly committed to the range of mainstream beliefs from the divinity of Christ to the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist to the importance of the Papacy. But, while they are determined to “keep the Faith,” they are also determined to “change the Church.”

Frequently, the response from chancery offices is skepticism about the orthodoxy of the group together with an assertion that Church governance is largely unchangeable because it was established by Christ. At its most extreme, this approach can wrap even the most time-bound conventions in the cloak of divine institution.

REVIEW HISTORY

A useful way to see whether the Catholic Church can be flexible is to look at history. The results may be surprising to many, especially Catholics who presume that current procedures have been constant through

the centuries. During its nearly 2,000 years, the Church has been rather nimble in adjusting its mechanisms for selecting popes and bishops, and changing the scope of authority of papal and diocesan offices in response to changing secular realities. Current concerns among American laity about increasing their voice in assuring proper supervision of priests and making all sorts of other policy decisions should not particularly threaten anyone familiar with the Church's history.

Take, for example, the election of popes — too many a prime example of the unchangeable procedures and ancient traditions of Roman Catholicism. Most recently, John Paul II rewrote the rules for electing popes. Instead of the traditional two-thirds plus one super majority of the voting cardinals, he decided that, after a limited number of days of voting, only a simple majority would be needed. In making this change, he prevented drawn out election conclaves by removing the pressure to settle on a centrist candidate for whom an overwhelming majority could vote. The Church has changed indeed.

The very election of the pope by a College of Cardinals was a practical device institutionalized only in the twelfth century to provide a simple system for selecting popes. Catholics believe that Jesus insti-

tuted the Papacy as a center of unity. But no one claims Jesus established unchangeable election rules.

And further change is quite possible. The present pope has often urged that all offices in the Church that do not require ordination should be open to women. Because, over the centuries, there have been cardinals who were laymen, we shouldn't be shocked if the next set of papal election laws allows for women electors.

Another area of surprising flexibility is the selection of bishops. We are used to the direct appointment of bishops by Rome without significant input by the laity or the clergy. But we should also be aware that, for centuries, Catholic bishops were elected by the priests assigned to the local cathedral. This vote was then proposed for papal confirmation, which was refused only for grave reasons. In a variant of that approach, the first American bishop, John Carroll, was elected by a vote of all the priests resident in the thirteen colonies.

CONCORDATS

In the High Middle Ages, popes and emperors struggled over whether either was validly enthroned without the other's assent. And, the final approval of bishops within each country was similarly at issue. Out of these struggles emerged the concordats (treaties) between the Vatican and individual European nations. In many concordats written in the last centuries, the government might nominate three candidates for bishop, and the Vatican was required to select one. Or, the reverse might be the case as well. Namely, that the Vatican nominated three, and the government had to choose one of them.

Secular politics influenced even the election of popes. As late as 1903, the Austro-Hungarian Emperor — through one of the cardinals who served as his spokesman inside the election conclave itself — vetoed the leading candidate for pope (Cardinal Rampolla), thus occasioning the election of Pius X.

When John Carroll was elected the first American bishop, the Vatican even sent the results to the new American government, in case it had any objections. Thomas Jefferson, the American representative in Paris, declined on behalf of the government to either approve or disapprove, and the Church achieved — for the first time since Constantine in the fourth century — independence from secular government influence over this central part of internal Church appointments.

Lay participation in Catholic decision-making bodies is not unheard of either. As early as the 1830s,

When John Carroll was elected the first American bishop, the Vatican even sent the results to the new American government

Bishop John England of Charleston, S.C., experimented with a bicameral diocesan legislature modeled somewhat on the secular government and somewhat on the practice of the Episcopal Church.

A word of caution: It would be prudent if Catholics would follow Bishop England's lead and study carefully the governance structures of the Protestant communities. Such study would yield some useful ideas about what works; it might also prevent Catholics from repeating other communities' mistakes. It would be sad, for example, if the determination of whether someone was a heretic could be decided by majority vote of a group with no formal training in theology.

In short, the Catholic Church has been able to operate with all sorts of systems for selecting her bishops and popes. Church governance has flexibly adjusted to new situations. Those who think that Church governance must be inflexible in order to be true to its religious mission are simply mistaken.

Groups like Voice of the Faithful, however, represent something really new. Its members are not government officials or even the traditional power blocs of society: the upper class — America's equivalent of the nobility — or the politicians or the wealthy. Instead, its members present a truly novel situation: a large and highly educated group of laity, which did not exist for the first 1,900 years of the Church's life.

When I was a child, my father would sometimes talk about his own childhood in New York City early in the twentieth century. It was considered inappropriate, he said, for the pastor to endorse from the altar candidates for city offices. So the pastor would hold a Sunday afternoon reception in the church hall.

Candidates acceptable to the pastor would be present and stand next to the pastor so they could shake hands with the long line of voters. My father used to say, "It had to be that way. The pastor had an education, while many of the parishioners couldn't read. People depended on him for guidance in everything from voting to handling their money to raising their children."

Today, things have changed. In many a parish, the majority of the congregation are as well educated as their priest, often even better educated. They have the self-confidence to make up their own minds about politics and finances and child rearing. And they believe they have something more to contribute to their parish and their diocese than a passive acquiescence.

When Vatican Council II ushered in "the age of the laity," there was recognition of this growing competence among parishioners. An array of new organizations for lay participants like parish councils and diocesan pastoral councils was introduced, and laypeople were added to decision-making bodies at the diocesan level. In most instances, these new entities were merely advisory, giving counsel to the pastor or the bishop. Occasionally, however, the groups had real power. The lay-dominated Finance Council of the Archdiocese of Boston, for example, is reported to have rejected Cardinal Law's initial acceptance of a \$30 million settlement with the victims of former priest John Geoghan. Under the Code of Canon Law promulgated by Pope John Paul II in 1983, the Cardinal must obtain approval — not just advice — from the Finance Council for such an "act of extraordinary administration."

So, on the one hand, an array of changes, including laypeople in Church decision-making, is not a problem. However, the extent to which such inclusion will actually occur is highly uncertain. The Church's difficulty and its opportunity is that the laity is educated, but not necessarily in the faith.

Ironically, with the loss after Vatican II of nuns from grade school and high school education, basic instruction in the fundamentals of Catholic belief declined markedly. I am still amazed each fall by how many Regis University freshmen who are Catholics show up on our Denver doorstep and know nothing about what a sacrament is, or about the basic categories used by the Church to analyze moral questions, or even that the letters INRI at the top of a crucifix abbreviate four Latin words that mean, "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews." In recent years, Regis and many other Catholic institutions of higher education have offered more courses in the basics of

Catholicism. Campus ministers find many Catholic students need similar introduction to Catholic worship. This is nothing new. In many instances, the parents of these students are equally uninformed.

From the clergyman's point of view, the educated laity has a lopsided education and doesn't realize it. But education brings self-confidence. So people who are educated in business or engineering tend to think they are competent in religious questions even though they have not been seriously educated in theology. As anyone who has visited an avant-garde art show has experienced, there is a terrible temptation to dismiss what we do not understand.

Making things even more difficult, Americans tend to place immense store on democratic process, dismissing other forms of government out of hand. The Church's government tradition, of course, is monarchical, with bishop and pope typically making decisions after consultation. For a people who take for granted that majority vote is the best way to make decisions, it is difficult to understand the advantages for consistent doctrine and practice that come from the Church's sort of limited monarchy where decisions emerge after the receipt of extensive advice.

For bishops who know American ecclesiastical history, lay power is a threat. In the first decades of the United States, lay trustees owned each parish church and often used their ownership to refuse to accept the bishop's appointee as pastor because the priest was not of the parishioners' nationality. More recently, many a pastor can recount how post-Vatican II parish councils produced mostly bickering and deadlock. So there is a temptation for bishops and clergy to think that laity bring nothing worthwhile to Church decision-making and deserve no place at the table.

However, when clerical sex abuse comes to the fore, bishops and clergy suddenly realize that laypeople have a right to be certain that their children are not abused and a right to monitor whether their contributions are spent on the charitable purposes for which they were given. The laity very much have a place at the table and offer a balance to the tendency of clerics — like any party in power in any organization — to be alert primarily to the interests of their own group. And clergy reluctantly recall that those failures of parish councils probably trace more to lack of know-how and leadership by clergy when this "novel" form of participation was introduced.

At such a juncture, even pessimistic priests recall that the Church is really all its members, not just its officials. Membership comes through baptism. And lay Catholics are just as much at the heart of the

Church as any priest is. The laity, just as much as the clergy, are the Church's witness to the world that meaning comes through serving God in others, not through living for self.

So, far from despairing about the limits of today's laity, it is my experience that these educated Catholics — precisely because of their education and the self-confidence that education creates — are interested in listening if they are approached with respectful invitations and not with orders to conform. It is striking, for example, how many Catholics preparing for marriage are receptive to strict Catholic teachings once they learn for the first time the tradition of thought that lies behind these teachings. But such receptivity doesn't happen if they are first approached with authority rather than invitation. The Church is paying the price for too many sermons and counseling sessions where the easy appeal to authority replaced explanation and invitation. That worked in my father's immigrant parish, but not now. This is a time when the bishops and the priests of the American Catholic Church face a major choice: Will Church leaders learn to adapt to an educated laity whose intellectual short suit is knowledge of religion? Or will priests and bishops continue to treat today's laity as the semi-literate congregations of the Church's first nineteen centuries?

If the Church as a whole chooses the former path, there will need to be a major retooling of the approach of sermons and counseling and written materials and the interpretation of regulations. What is needed is a change of attitude, not of doctrine. We need to launch a "new evangelization" of our own educated members to educate them even better in the faith. And bishops need to work simultaneously to open access to all sorts of decision-making bodies.

In this vein, we can expect American bishops to experiment with giving laity a serious voice in the

normal process of assigning priests to parishes and other duties. Laypeople will help populate new diocesan committees to audit all disciplinary actions — not just sexual abuse — involving clergy and other employees of dioceses and parishes. The voice of the laity can readily grow through membership on diocesan school boards. Lay influence on diocesan financial priorities — already on the rise — will expand. Even broad consultation of priests and laity about selection of bishops would not be new but merely a return to past custom. And lay participation — through decision-making synods or congresses — might play a major role in determining which policy issues in the secular world should receive special Church attention. Should right to life issues receive more Catholic emphasis, for example, than civil rights and social justice during election season?

On the other hand, Church leaders can give in to temptation and take the path they legitimately walked for the first 1,900 years of an uneducated faithful. In today's context that means they will expect the laity to conform or quietly drop out (as many have been doing for decades). If the Church's leadership chooses this path, Catholicism will have no meaningful answer to groups like Voice of the Faithful. Instead, the Church will have unnecessarily abandoned its own and demonstrated that, at least at the moment, it does not know how to cope with an educated laity.



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A Fruit Salad of the Spirit

Valerie Schultz

"Ask anyone who's been married for more than two days about using the fruits of the Spirit."

— Most Rev. John T. Steinbock, Bishop of Fresno,
to Confirmation candidates, May 2003

As spring warms to summer, strawberries are on their way out of season, cantaloupe is on sale, cherries are just being picked, watermelon is around the corner, and I'm really annoyed with my husband. My hands are feeling melons in the produce department, searching for soft spots, but my mind is on an argument we had this morning, which now seems a long time ago. The day is winding down as I join other tired women in the checkout line, all with quick-fix dinners in their baskets and perhaps unkind words on their minds.

The substance of our argument was light — an unmade telephone call. The heaviness rested in our tones of voice, our choices of words, our avoided eyes. And while I am holding onto my anger, I feel a small nudge at my heart. I am buying California fruit, but I am attempting to ignore spiritual fruit.

"The harvest of the Spirit," writes St. Paul to the Galatians, "is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness,

goodness, fidelity, gentleness, and self-control." (5:22-23) How easily I forget these qualities when it is far more important that I be right. Yet nowhere on the list of the fruits of the Spirit do I find correctness. Or self-righteousness. Or inflexibility. All of which I am seeing in myself as I turn the words of our argument over in my mind. My words lie heavy as rocks, and when turned with honesty, reveal unpleasant slimy creatures hiding in their weighted shade, the destroyers of the Spirit.

The truth is that marriage can be very hard work. It is a vocation of two. We expect people with other types of vocations, such as priests and nuns, to dedicate their lives to the maintenance and growth of that vocation — that's what they signed on for — but we are sometimes surprised by and unprepared for the work of a marriage. It is not glimpsed in the happy-ever-aftering with which we feed our romantic imaginations. There are those days when it seems like being single would be so much easier.

On the surface we view marriage as a one-time sacrament, like Confirmation or Baptism. You get to celebrate it, complete with a certificate of proof, once. We treasure the glossy photos, the packed-away dress, the small appliances and place settings of china, the honeymoon memories. It was a day of froth and delirium and dancing and wide open

hearts. Yet, in reality, if this crazy scheme of two-becoming-one is going to work, the sacrament of marriage must function more as the Eucharist, in which we are encouraged to participate as often as possible. Daily, even. We must honor each day of a marriage as a sacramental one. On some days we feel flushed with thanksgiving to God for this miraculous spouse. On some days, we praise Jesus for his life-giving example of how to love another. On other days, we need to get down on our knees and beg the Spirit to sustain us with sweet fruit.

Love. Beatles John and Paul remind us in song that “all you need is love,” and in some ways, they are exactly right. Love tops the list of necessary marital qualities. We begin as a couple in love, and while being in love is a heady feeling and makes for a wonderful sex life, it is the self-giving love that keeps us together. Being in love is the “for better” part of the vow. Self-giving love is the “for worse.” I remember worrying, after my brave husband remained in the operating room during my emergency cesarean section, that he would no longer love me in a romantic way after seeing the operation. Literally: the doctor sliced open my ripe belly, lifted up my uterus, extracted our blue (but soon pink) baby and tucked the uterus back in before stapling me together. This is how my husband later described it. My conscious self was elsewhere. Of course, my fear was unfounded, but I think I was really afraid that he would lose that worshipful look that made me giddy in the early days of marriage. While I have since learned that I am not a goddess, I do know that the one true thing I can count on, no matter what, is our love. Even when we are furious, I know that I am the love of his life. As he is mine.

Joy. Surely one of the most awesome joys in a marriage is the birth of a child, and we have been hugely blessed four times over with healthy beautiful daughters.

It is also one of the most humbling moments, to witness what God can create with two people’s bodies. We crave these big-ticket joys: births, the winning lottery ticket, exotic vacations, the biggest house in the neighborhood, the smartest child. But sometimes I think the Spirit is more likely found in the smaller joys: a light hand in the hair, a knowing glance, an unsolicited word of praise, the physical gift of self, again and again. And even smaller: shared ice cream, a good movie, a walk in the first snow. The joys of marriage often are endless, if one only has eyes to see. In a stable marriage these joys are also very much

Marital peace is the result of a conscious decision not to strike first, and sometimes not even to defend

taken for granted.

Peace. “Peace be with you,” says Christ, so often in the Gospels. Peace has to be more than the absence of war. It is more encompassing than a truce. Marital peace is the result of a conscious decision not to strike first, and sometimes not even to defend. The just war theory does not apply to marriage. Peace is the only path and the only goal. Skirmishes will happen, over territory or responsibility, as will guerilla attacks of ill mood. The peace treaty may have to be re-negotiated when differences arise, and new terms established by consensus. There is no justification in a marriage for terrorism, although, sadly, I have seen it occur.

Patience. I would prefer not to address this spiritual fruit, because I am so glaringly lacking in it.

Patience is a highly desirable quality in a marriage, as everyone probably agrees. Let me know where I can buy some in a large value-pack. I confess to impatience again and again. I am impatient at long red lights, with wet towels on the bed, when children forget homework, and pretty much with anything that doesn’t go as I think it ought. I work on muting my first reaction. My husband, God bless him, has infinite patience.

Kindness. According to the song, “You always hurt the one you love, the one you wouldn’t hurt at all.” We often accuse our mates of doing for others what he or she would not do for us. But we do it, too. It is easier to say no to the one with whom we are most comfort-

able, with whom we feel no need to impress or stand on ceremony. Kindness is the fruit we are more likely to extend to strangers than to our spouses; sometimes we are cruel just because we can be. At the end of the day, we are too tired/drained/spent to be kind. At the end of the day, this is a mistake. Kindness may be the most underrated gift partners bring to a marriage.

Goodness. My husband is the kind of man who carries spiders outside rather than squash them, who returns incorrect change in his favor, who will drive far out of his way to retrieve a beloved stuffed animal, who will give his last dollar to anyone who asks. He has a basic goodness that shines in him, and that continually manages to bring forth the good that hides in me. Ideally, married people bring out the good in each other. My mother once said, about a relative and his girlfriend, "They are the worst thing that could have happened to each other." I remember being chilled by the thought of manifesting such utter detriment to another. Married people must strive to be the best thing that could ever happen to each other.

Fidelity. More than faithfulness in sexual matters, fidelity speaks to the commitment of husband and wife to their marriage as something organic, precious, a creation greater than the sum of their parts. Fidelity is inextricably tied to the sacramental, to what is holy in the everyday grit. A sense of fidelity to our marriage enables us to weather the mildly irritating and the tragic, and to cherish the mildly delightful and the profound. When my husband and I decided to marry, a number of friends advised us against it, seeing only failure in both of our flighty pasts. Part jokingly, we decided that divorce would never be an option, just to spite them. The part that was not joking was the unseen birth of our fidelity.

Gentleness. The human heart is a mighty organ in its capacity to love. Yet it can be broken so easily by whom it loves. Marriage places the heart in a position of abject vulnerability. It is held by another, which feels sublime. It beats for another, which is as it should be. But without the gift of gentleness, the heart can be squeezed to death. Those we love have the greatest capacity to rough us up and harm us. I remember my youngest sister, at a tender age, hugging the family dog and telling him, "You're so cute, I'm just gonna have to kill you." Which makes perfect

sense to me. Gentleness is sensing when to stop squeezing. And when to start.

Self Control. This is where I report that my sister did not kill the dog. Self-control is an under-utilized gift of the Spirit, because we are tempted to figure, "If I can't let go with my spouse, then who?" The word "control" has negative connotations, relationship-wise, and, of course, no one prays for a controlling spouse. But we may pray for self-control, which is the essence of maturity, even as we love with reckless abandon. Self-control allows selflessness a chance to breathe, and relegates selfishness to the past. It is critical to the vocation of marriage that we mutually "put away childish things" (again with thanks to St. Paul) as we grow together and nurture each other. Giving over to self-control means that sometimes we will give more than we get, and other times we will get more than we give, in the lovely fluidity of marriage. Contrary to popular opinion, marriage is almost never a fifty-fifty proposition. What strong and true relationship is?

St. Paul's naming of the fruits of the Spirit is so short and sweet, self-explanatory and comforting. They are simple and sometimes incredibly difficult to put into practice consciously. They are the exact opposite of the brawling and selfish way in which we sometimes instinctively want to behave. St. Paul, no stranger himself to contrary behavior, begins the third chapter of this same letter with the words, "You stupid Galatians." We humans manage to find such petty detours on our faith journeys, such false starts and potholes on the pilgrim road of vocation. Spiritually speaking, we are directionally challenged. But always, the Spirit beckons. I realize, on my drive home, that I am having yet another stupid Galatian day. When I get home, I will scoop seeds from cantaloupe, slice fragrant strawberries, add all nine fruits of the Spirit and serve the careful arrangement to my husband. Who deserves all of this and more.



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The Changing Family

Eugene R. Kole, O.F.M., Com., D.Min.

Two generations ago, the typical American family consisted of a father, a mother and three or four children. Clearly, contemporary family arrangements are more fluid and transitory. The traditional family of the twentieth century consisted of a working father, a mother who stayed at home and their children. Many people romanticize this family structure, harkening back to television shows of the 1950s and 1960s like "Leave it to Beaver" and "Ozzie and Harriet." In these shows the mother was always nurturing and available, the father always gave good advice, and the children were always well behaved. These shows made traditional families look especially loving, supportive and successful. Many parents of today compare their turbulent, hectic lives with those of a fictionalized past and find their own situations wanting. Deborah Elder Brown and Michele Donley, writing in *Newsweek's* fall 1990 special issue on families, support this theory: "Much of the turmoil felt by parents in the '90s derives from the fact that so many are children of the '50s. Their image of the ideal family comes from TV shows like 'Father Knows Best.'"

This idealized version of the traditional family, however, has never really existed. While a greater number of traditional families may have existed in the 1950s, most families were not the romantic versions that appeared on television. Between 1940 and

1960, for example, the number of working wives doubled from 15 to 30 percent. In addition, the divorce rate of the 1950s was higher than at any previous time, except for a brief upsurge after World War II. Many families in the 1950s may have felt the same sense of upheaval that prompts parents now to long for an idealized image of the traditional family.

MYTHS ABOUT MARRIAGE AND FAMILIES

Despite evidence that contradicts some of our beliefs about marriages and families, a variety of myths continue to affect the way we think about these institutions. Among the common myths are: Families were happier in the past; marrying and having children was the "natural" thing to do; "good" families are self-sufficient; every family is always a bastion of love and support; and we should all strive to be the "perfect" family. Watching the news, viewing documentaries and TV and reading daily newspapers and various periodicals will quickly dispel any doubt that the myths are just that — myths.

We often hear that "in the good old days" there were fewer problems, people were happier, and families were stronger. Because of the widespread influence of movies and television, many of us cherish romantic notions of the frontier days as portrayed in

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John Wayne films, of the antebellum South of *Gone With the Wind*, and the strong, poor, but loving rural family presented in the 1970s television series "The Waltons" and "The Little House on the Prairie." Very likely, we glorify this "golden age of family" only because we know so little about the past. John Demos (1986) observes that even in the 1800s, many families experienced desertion by a parent or births of illegitimate children. Family life in the "good old days" was filled with deprivation, loneliness and physical dangers. Families worked very hard and were often decimated by accidents, illness and disease. Even in the mid-1940s, average life expectancy meant that parental death often led to stepfamilies, foster care or orphanages. The chances of not growing up in an intact family were actually greater in the past than they are now. The "golden age of families" never, in fact, existed.

CHANGING STRUCTURES

Today, 70 percent of America's families are non-traditional. The most common family type is composed of either a two-career married couple and their children or a single parent and his or her children. These two groups comprise 29 percent of all families, making them almost as common as the traditional family. Stepfamilies are also increasingly common. In addition to these types, a minority of Americans — homosexual couples with children, grandparents raising grandchildren, communal families — have broadened the definition of family even further. Thus, while many people may believe that the traditional family is best — 63 percent of Americans polled claim it is an ideal — they have found it to be unfulfilling or

unattainable.

According to William H. Doherty, a professor of family and social science, one explanation may be that "traditional family structures are no longer appropriate for the modern age" because such structures no longer meet some families' emotional and economic needs. Another explanation may be that Americans, especially single mothers, may not have a choice in their family structure. Many single mothers were either abandoned by their husbands, forced to leave abusive situations, or never married the father of their children. Many still believe in the importance of the traditional family, but circumstances have not allowed them to live as one.

CHANGES IN STRUCTURE AND FUNCTION

As the American family changes, the roles traditional and nontraditional families will play in the future remain uncertain. The family still continues to fulfill such basic functions as producing and socializing children, providing family members with emotional support, legitimizing and regulating sexual activity and placing family members in society. At the same time, a number of specific changes are occurring in American families: there is more racial and ethnic diversity; membership is more varied than that of the traditional nuclear family; there are more single-parent families, stepfamilies and families in which the mother works outside of the home; and the phenomenon of couples living together as husband and wife without formalizing or legalizing their relationship in a religious ceremony or legal action is accelerating beyond what we imagined.

Social scientists generally agree that the family is changing, but they disagree as to whether it is changing in drastic and essentially unhealthy ways, whether it is simply continuing to adapt and adjust to changing circumstances, or whether it is changing in ways that will ultimately make it stronger.

Many of us are ambivalent about change. Since 1992, both the Democrats and the Republicans have endorsed traditional family values. In many surveys Americans have said that such traditional family values as having a happy marriage and providing emotional support to their family are more important than having a rewarding job or being free of obligations to do whatever they want.

But the evidence suggests that we often make choices that are contrary to traditional family values. For example, many people divorce because they are personally unhappy, and some even use their children as pawns in protracted divorce battles. Some parents

place their highest priority on their own happiness and ignore their children's emotional needs.

In November 1991, the National Commission on Children issued its final report based on two surveys conducted over a two- and one-half-year period. Called *Beyond Rhetoric: A New American Agenda for Children and Families*, it revealed that a majority of American adults were discouraged about the status of America's families. More than half of the adults surveyed believed that parents were not doing as good a job as the previous generation, and 88 percent believed that parenting was more difficult now than in the past.

In the same report, however, most of the parents surveyed described their own families as successful. Ninety-seven percent of the parents said their relationship with their children was either good or excellent. In addition, 70 percent of the families said they ate dinner together regularly, a factor many experts believe is an indication of a strong family. The contradictions apparent in the report indicate a disparity between people's perception of their own families and the perception of families outside their own.

DECLINE OR TRANSITION?

David Popenoe, a sociologist, contends: "During the past 25 years, the institution of the family has weakened substantially." In his article, "The Family in Decline," in the August 1993 issue of the *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, Popenoe develops his theory that four trends — the decline in fertility, the sexual revolution, working married mothers and the increased divorce rate — signal a widespread retreat from the traditional nuclear family in terms of its life-long, sexually exclusive unit, focused on children, with a separate-sphere division of labor between husband and wife. Unlike most previous family change, which reduced family functions and diminished the importance of the kin group, the family change of the past twenty-five years has tended to break up the "nucleus" of the family unit — the bond between husband and wife. Nuclear units, according to Popenoe, are losing ground to single-parent families, serial and stepfamilies and unmarried and homosexual couples. He states:

Individual family members have become more autonomous and less bound by the family group, and the group has become less cohesive. Fewer of its traditional social functions are now carried out by the family; these have shifted to other institutions. The family has lost more power and authority to other institutions, especially to the state and its agencies. The family has grown smaller, less stable,

The family change of the past twenty-five years has tended to break up the 'nucleus' of the family unit

and has a shorter life span; people are therefore family members for a smaller percentage of their life. The outcome of these trends is that people have become less willing to invest time, money, and energy in family life. It is the individual him — or herself — not the family unit, in whom the main investments are increasingly made.

Based on his study and observations, Popenoe laments the fact that so many family experts are still reluctant to refer to the transformation in the American family as a "family decline." He believes this to be unfortunate because the concept of family as a declining or weakening institution provides a "best fit" for many of the changes that have taken place.

On the other hand, sociologist Dennis Orthner, in *Rebuilding a Nest: A New Commitment to the American Family*, acknowledges that the American family is changing but does not agree that the American family is falling apart. Orthner believes that the family changes now occurring are connected to, and perhaps rooted in, fundamental shifts in norms and values in American society. He explains:

Much of the current discussion of the family focuses on changes in family structures and functions. However, these are but behavioral manifestations of what is occurring in the soul of society. The beliefs that used to form the basis for relational stability are being reexamined. . . . Norms of family behaviors — the values that underlie those behaviors — are in transition. The result: unstable and widely varying interpretations of appropriate and inappropriate behaviors. During major transitions such as these, any organization (e.g., family, corporation, etc.) will find it difficult to establish firm rules for organizational formation, maintenance, and dissolution. The family system is not alone in this struggle.

A relationship can only be as strong and as healthy as the individuals within it

FACT AND REALITY

The face of the American family is changing. It is evolving. It is in transition. There is no doubt that the structure of the American family is significantly different today than it was fifty years ago. Whether it is better or worse has yet to be seen. Though the four basic functions of family remain constant and intact, stresses on these basic functions are not without long-term implications that will effect changes in values and in behaviors.

We may have limited control over all the changes that are coming about as a result of changes in society, technology, education and even in our understanding of human relationships, but we do have control over the values that are important to our family, of the rituals and traditions that support and celebrate the beliefs and values of our family, of the quality of the relationships, of the strength of the bonds that will exist among and between the members of our family, of the behaviors that are acceptable and consistent with the beliefs and values of our family. Further, we can determine the priorities for our family and how those priorities will influence the decisions we make in our family.

THE CHALLENGE

Amidst change of every kind, while being impacted by forces at work for which we have little or no control, and juggling more responsibilities in our daily lives than ever before, we are challenged to foster a healthy and nurturing family life. We can choose values, behaviors and activities that will contribute to

the overall health, well-being and happiness of our family. It can be done.

SUSTAINING A HEALTHY FAMILY

The first line in M. Scott Peck's *The Road Less Traveled* is "Life is difficult." *Life is difficult*. We can add that life comes with no guarantees. This is not to take the joy, or the hope of joy, out of life, but rather to recognize the reality that, to varying degrees, life will have its challenges and hurdles as well as its pains and struggles. Spiritual writers, past and present, remind us often that there is no growth without struggle and sacrifice. So, too, the relationship we call marriage and the set of relationships that form a family will have their moments of difficulty, challenge, struggle, hurts, pains, misunderstandings and problems. From all of them we can grow as persons and in our relationships.

A relationship can only be as strong and as healthy as the individuals within it. If one of the persons entering the relationship of marriage is "broken," is incomplete in some way, brings a significant amount of unfinished work from childhood and/or adolescence into the relationship, or has major physical, emotional, and/or psychological problems, the relationship will begin with huge challenges and problems. If both persons entering the relationship bring major issues, problems and hurts into the relationship, the impact on the relationship more than doubles its problems and challenges because in addition to the two "handicapped" individuals, the "we" or "us" relationship — the new reality created by marriage — will present its own challenges and problems. Before entering marriage, people need to know themselves and to have dealt with their principal, substantive and predominant problems and issues. Ideally, people entering marriage will have achieved the developmental goals appropriate to their age.

Subsequently, relationships in a family can only be as strong, nurturing and life-giving as the individuals in it. Of course, the physical, emotional, social and spiritual health of parents has the greatest impact on the strength and vitality of the overall health and well-being of the family. Building healthy and nurturing relationships in a family presumes that the parents have achieved the level of maturity and acquired a set of skills for dealing with life's problems and challenges. In addition, parents should have

made a firm commitment to working on their relationship as husband and wife as well as on their family life, with its unique set of relationships. This requires a willingness to make family life a priority and to make the decisions and sacrifices necessary to keep family life a priority. It is not easy. It is possible.

The relationship of husband and wife establishes the marriage; it is the primary and foundational relationship upon which a family is built. The work of marriage continues even after children are born. In this regard it is critical that the husband and wife never forget that this primary relationship will take work and must be actively and intentionally nourished throughout the relationship. When a couple forgets or fails to tend to their marriage at any time in its life, but especially when children become part of their relationship, they will find that, slowly and almost without notice, they will grow apart. If husbands and wives do not grow together, share in and contribute to each other's growth throughout the relationship, the relationship is doomed. The greatest gift a mother can give her child is to love the child's father; her husband; the greatest gift a father can give his child is to love the child's mother; his wife. Their love created the child; their love provides the soil and environment in which their child will grow into adulthood.

The birth of children creates a nuclear family. Children depend on their parents for care, support, comfort, nurturing, discipline, affection and love. Parents are not only the first teachers of their children, they are their child's first models of good relationships. Their relationship becomes the paradigm experienced and observed by their child (children) that will be imitated, adapted and formative of their child's views about marriage, about the relationship between husband and wife, about what it means to be mother and father.

Love is a decision. Love doesn't just happen; it takes hard work. Equally, creating a healthy and life-giving marital relationship and building healthy, nurturing and life-giving family relationships take hard work. In fact, husbands and wives, most of whom become mothers and fathers, make love a reality in their commitment to working on their relationship as husband and wife and/or as mothers and fathers. Love takes on flesh in living it.

TRAITS OF A HEALTHY FAMILY

A healthy family is one in which each member of the family is valued and respected; one in which each member of the family feels safe and secure; one in which each member of the family is supported, com-

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forted, encouraged, guided and challenged to grow. A healthy family provides an environment and resources for each member of the family to fulfill developmental tasks appropriate to each family member's age, to achieve an appropriate level of maturity and to reach his or her maximum potential.

Healthy families can be identified by certain traits. Family life can be improved and strengthened by working on these traits. Though all of the traits are important and would be present to some degree in a healthy family, they are not necessarily all present during the entire duration of a family or at all times. These traits are the signs that indicate that all the ingredients for creating, building and sustaining a healthy family are present.

1. Adults — husbands and wives, mothers and fathers — are secure, self-assured, confident and mature and have made their marriages and family life the highest priority.
2. Relationships are nurtured. Husbands and wives make the time and engage in the activities that foster their growth and provide ample opportunities for a variety of adult experiences — intellectual, emotional, social, sexual and spiritual — that will contribute to their growth as individuals and as a couple, especially after a child or children become part of the relationship. Quality time is spent with each child and as a family. Each member of the family has his or her needs met, feels loved and wanted, and has opportunities to develop his or her talents, abilities and interests.

3. Communication is fostered and encouraged. A husband and wife who do not grow together, grow apart. The same is true for individuals within a family. If members of a family are not growing together, they are growing apart. In order to grow together, to form bonds of mutual love and support, and to give and receive love, sharing is of critical importance. Sharing requires trust and respect as well as meaningful conversation. Good communication requires the willingness to be open, honest, non-judgmental and vulnerable as well as the willingness to listen with an open heart and ears. Spending quality time together is an essential ingredient for good communication. Sharing at least one meal each day that is unhurried and unrushed and in which each member of the family, especially each child, has an opportunity to talk about his or her day is a primary forum for meaningful conversation. All members of the family interact in significant ways regularly.

4. An environment of safety and security is created. Basic human needs are met: food, clothing, shelter. Providing spaces and situations in which emotional safety and security exist is very important, especially for children. One's psychological and social growth can be seriously impeded if a person does not grow up in a safe and secure environment. Though many people manage to "survive" home situations that do not provide a sense of safety and security, they also postpone the development of important social and emotional skills that are needed for adult and mature human relationships. Safety and security include the respect for privacy that each member of the family has for each other.

5. Persons are valued, and healthy relationships modeled and encouraged. Each person in the family feels wanted, valued, respected and loved. Each person in the family feels that his or her contribution to the family is important. Respect for the dignity and worth of each person in the family is evidenced in the way each member speaks to other family members; the way they treat one another; the way they are willing to help one another, as well as affirm and support one another.

6. Emotional health is cultivated and facilitated. Each member of the family learns to share his or her feelings about themselves, each other, others and their experiences. Trust, respect and an

awareness that confidences will be kept empower family members to share their thoughts and feelings and express their emotions. Emotions and feelings can be expressed and worked through in a caring and supportive environment, with people who are understanding and helpful. Great care is taken not to embarrass members of the family publicly and even in private if it can be avoided. Each member of the family is expected to be honest and forthright. Each member of the family feels affirmed.

7. Responsibility is shared. Husbands and wives treat each other as equals and share the primary responsibilities of maintaining a household and of making a house a home. Children are given responsibilities for household chores and responsibilities appropriate to their age. By sharing in the responsibilities of the home, children make a positive contribution, learn basic skills and develop a sense of competence.

8. Education, informal and formal, is provided and promoted. Parents continually develop their minds by reading and study and by participating in social, cultural and educational experiences. Parents take seriously their responsibility to provide formal education for their children and to participate in the educational experiences of their children. Parents accept their responsibility for socializing their children and for teaching their children a sense of right and wrong.

9. Humor is considered an important ingredient in oneself and in one's relationships. A good sense of humor is an essential quality in maturity. Learning to laugh at oneself and to laugh with others can be an elixir for many of life's difficult and trying moments and situations.

10. Play, recreation and vacations are incorporated into family life. Children report that spending time alone with their parents is very important to them. All of us need to relax and renew ourselves. We need to be relieved of the pressures and stresses of life. We need to develop hobbies and/or activities that provide a refuge and respite from the impact of the pressures and responsibilities of life.

11. Core beliefs, values and priorities are named and promoted in the family. Core beliefs and values, including a moral code, contribute to one's sense of meaning and purpose in life. They provide us

with the tools for making decisions. They are the representations of our character, the substance of who we are as individual persons. When our actions and behaviors are consistent with our core beliefs and values we become persons of integrity.

12. Rituals and traditions are developed. Rituals are ways of celebrating what we value. Rituals include going to church together, celebrating birthdays or other important life events, family gatherings, gift giving, decorating a Christmas tree as a family, etc. Rituals are ways of expressing our respect for, connection to and value of one another. Rituals bond members of a family. Traditions include stories and memories that are handed down from one generation to the next as well as activities — rituals and customs — that are repeated year after year and become an important part of one's life in a family and for maintaining the bonds within a family.
13. Resources for nurturing family life and dealing with problems are available and used. Sometimes life presents problems and challenges that are overwhelming. On the one hand we need resources — human and material — that help families maintain health and vitality. On the other hand, because human beings are not perfect and because the world is not perfect, we all experience problems, difficulties and challenges in life. Sometimes, they can be debilitating. Healthy individuals, as well as healthy families, admit they have problems, name the problem or problems, and seek out professionals who can help them solve the problem, resolve the problem, develop better coping skills and/or at least minimize the negative impact of the problem on individuals and on the family. Healthy individuals and healthy families face life's problems head-on.
14. Religion — with all of its beliefs, teachings, practices, rituals, morals and celebrations — provides a core religious experience and a worldview that helps individuals and families understand spiritual and human experience, gives meaning and purpose to one's life and the world and provides a base and norms for making decisions and for becoming persons of integrity. Religion can help individuals and families unite and integrate the confusing and disparate dimensions and experiences of life. Religion provides a framework and structure for understand-

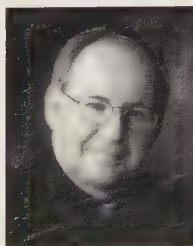
ing life, especially the nonmaterial aspects of life. Religion, because it very often provides a consistent and coherent worldview and way of being in the world, can bond people together, create a sense of community and contribute to the development of a personal spirituality.

15. Commitment to work at becoming a healthy family: intellectually, emotionally, socially, physically and spiritually.

One of the best ways of building a happy family is to work at making a happy marriage. This requires deliberate effort and sacrifice. Healthy families don't just happen. They are created and cultivated. The structure of family life is changing, and even some of the norms that govern family life are changing. But there is no reason that family life cannot be strong, nurturing and healthy in the 21st century. The key ingredient to creating and sustaining a healthy family is the same today as it was a hundred years ago — commitment. If a husband and wife or a couple is, first and foremost, committed to nurturing their relationship and actually making the decisions that support that commitment, they will have a good foundation for a healthy family. If a husband and wife or a couple make the same kind of commitment to creating and sustaining a healthy family, and if they are willing to make decisions, based on an agreed upon set of values and priorities, they can have a healthy family. Making love a reality is hard work, work that requires intentionality, sacrifice and commitment. The same is needed to produce a healthy family.

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Generation X: The Silent Gap

Lynette M. Petruska, Esq.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Although this article refers to the generation gap in religious life, its message is useful wherever there are groups composed of members of different generations or cultures.

Several years ago I was talking to one of the sisters in my former community. A friend of hers was coming for a visit. I asked the woman's age. "She's our age," the sister replied. The response left me perplexed. I was thirty; she was fifty-two. Lacking twenty-two of her years, I wasn't sure what our age was. The woman who visited was in her early fifties. Our age was her age. Was it?

GENERATION GAP

This encounter may seem insignificant, but I believe it illustrates one of the greatest challenges facing religious life today: The belief that the dominant culture is normative and that everyone else is or should be like it. We all tend to assume others are like us, particularly when they look like us. This belief structure creates a silent generation gap in religious life that is rarely seen and even less frequently talked about. It poses significant challenges for younger reli-

gious and the communities wishing to incorporate them.

In my former congregation, there are no women of color or women from another culture. The greatest cultural clash we experienced was between the Germans and the Irish who had dominated our community. It resolved itself years ago when the German sisters wholeheartedly embraced St. Patrick's Day. We have not faced the challenges of incorporating the norms and the attitudes of another culture into community life. After all, we are all alike. Or are we? The generation gap can be as challenging, albeit less noticeable, for younger sisters in the minority.

I do not believe that anyone is intentionally insensitive to younger community members or is trying to dominate in this silent gap within religious life. In my own experience, many women tried to reach out to and incorporate me into the community. I appreciated their efforts. They helped me incorporate the customs of religious life, learn a whole new vocabulary and appreciate the core values around which we unite despite differences in age, race or national origin. Nonetheless, there are nonessentials to religious life that are presented as normative and sometimes necessary simply because they are normative in the dominant culture.

I would like to begin with some harmless examples. When I first entered community, one pastime was to gather around the piano and sing songs that were part of the life of the community. Many I recognized, like “Bicycle Built for Two,” although I couldn’t sing it. Many I did not know. Once when we were gathered at the piano, a sister asked me what kind of music I enjoyed and suggested the pianist might be able to lead us in one of “my songs.” I said I liked rock music. She asked if there was anything I would like the pianist to play. I replied that I didn’t think she would know any of my music. She asked me to name a group I liked. “Supertramp,” I replied. From the look on her face, I could not tell if we were still talking about music.

On another occasion, I attempted to illustrate the differences in generations. I asked if anyone had ever slam-danced. No one even knew what I was talking about and certainly never had danced this way. I did not think it was a good idea to demonstrate the technique or to mention that when I was in college, I had enjoyed slam-dancing to the music of a punk band called the Dead Kennedys. To be honest, I never threw myself into a Mosh-Pit and do not understand why anyone would want to, but I would not assume that there is something abnormal about young people who had.

GAP ILLUSTRATIONS

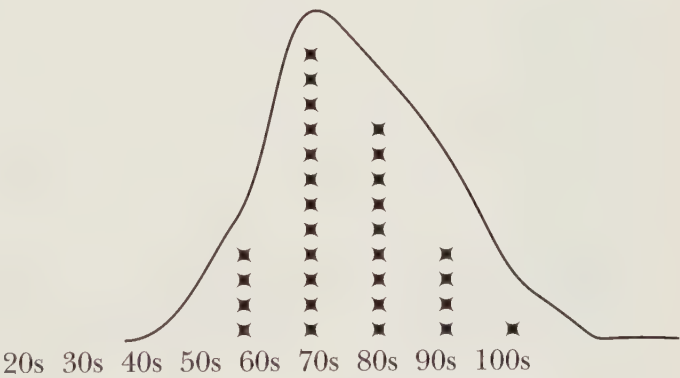
Admittedly, these are insignificant illustrations of the generation gap, but there are others. When I told a friend I was considering writing this article she groaned. “If I have to listen one more time to the fact that I am aging, diminishing and not able to do as much as I used to, I’ll scream. The community has been telling me that since I was 28!” I nodded agreement. I heard the exact same thing in my ten years of religious life. While it is true for many, it is not true for all. Because there are too few younger sisters in religious life, too often they are forgotten in planning community discussions and prayers. We do not celebrate sisters in the age of generativity in the same way we celebrate, provide resources for and support those entering retirement. When I suggested this once, I was coldly told: “We are all still productive members of this community, Sister.” This is true, but it was clear that I was using generativity in reference to Erik Erikson’s developmental model, which refers to those ages thirty to fifty-five, whose developmental task is to integrate becoming a productive member of society. The response I received led me to believe that I was expected to accommodate older sisters and their unique challenges and needs, but they were not

I asked if anyone had ever slam-danced. No one even knew what I was talking about

expected to accommodate or even notice mine.

It may be easiest to illustrate this point using a bell curve adapted to the age distribution in my former community. A picture is worth a thousand words. It is easy to see where the dominant culture lies in this community. Generation X is barely on the chart. It is difficult to recognize and accommodate that which barely exists. What communities need to recognize is that those small blips on the screen are human beings that need to fit somewhere, too.

Chart: Age distribution in author’s former community



There was no peer group or peer support the entire time I lived in community. While this created its own challenges, I met my needs for peer companionship with friends outside the community. All of my experiences in community involved intergenerational living. This is not inherently a problem because all of

us in community live with people who are different from us. I believe the challenges are increased, however, when a group of sisters has lived together for a long time. I had this experience once with a group of sisters who were very active, but all over age sixty.

It was hard to understand and break into spoken and unspoken patterns of behavior that had been deeply entrenched. For example, one of the greatest joys for this particular house was Saturday cleaning. To be honest, I didn't get it. After working a full week, I wanted to go out and have fun. I did not want to release myself in cleaning, but I tried to fit in. When I was cleaning, I liked to blast rock music and dance. That didn't really fit in, either. There were too many differences, and it didn't work. Admittedly, this may not have been a generational problem. Anyone trying to break into a group that has lived together for so long would find similar challenges. When it doesn't work out, it is too easy to place the blame on the new person because the rest of the group was able to get along together for years.

There are attitudes and values that silently divide the generations. This is simply a fact. However, when the dominant culture does not recognize these differences, or worse, assumes that their attitudes, values and behaviors are normative and younger sisters are

deviant, real difficulties arise. Implicit in this attitude is the belief that everyone should act and be just like them. This is impossible given that younger religious cannot act and be in a way that age and life experience does not allow. It places a terrible burden on younger religious who may already feel disconnected from the dominant culture.

In religious life the generations at issue are the GI Generation (1901-1924), the Silent Generation (1925-42), the Baby Boomers (1943-1960) and Generation X (1961-1981). Religious life is dominated by the GI and Silent Generations. In one religious community of sisters, for example, the median age of individual congregations ranges from sixty-three to seventy-six years. Within that community, 25 percent of the sisters are members of the GI Generation, 57 percent the Silent Generation, 17 percent Boomers and 1 percent Xers. I was the only member of my congregation below age fifty when I left.

Each generation has significant moments that help define it and its values. Some of these moments are shared by two generations. Some of the defining moments for the generations currently comprising religious life are set forth below in Table 1.

Table 1. Events that Shaped the Generation (Howe and Strauss, 2000)

	Entering Childhood	Entering Young Adulthood
GI	World War I and Prohibition	Great Depression, New Deal, WWII
Silent	Great Depression, New Deal, and WWII	Cold War
Boomer	Cold War	Consciousness Revolution, Vietnam, Watergate
X	Consciousness Revolution, Vietnam, and Watergate	Culture Wars and the Roaring '90s

Table 2. Attitudes and Beliefs of the Generations (Bob McCarty, National Federation of Catholic Youth Ministry, 2001)

	Silent	Boomers	Xers
Leisure is...	A reward for hard work	The point of life	A relief
Education is...	A dream	A birthright	A way to get ahead
Future is...	A rainy day to work for	Less important than now	Uncertain but manageable
Program means...	A social program	A cult	Software
Defining Idea is...	Duty	Individuality	Diversity
Celebrating...	Victory	Youth	Savvy
Success is...	Something I fought hard to win	Something I deserve because I served	Having two jobs
Style...	Team player	Self-absorbed	Entrepreneurs
Surprises in Life are...	Sometimes good and sometimes bad	All good	Something to be avoided — all bad
Rewards are...	Something I've earned	Something I deserve	Something I need
Work is...	An obligation	An exciting adventure	A difficult challenge

More striking are the generational attitudes and values that have resulted from these life experiences. Table 2 provides some examples of these differences.

Attitudinal differences offer unique challenges for bridging the silent gap in religious life. For example, I question everything. I don't mean to be difficult, but I grew up in the post-Watergate "question authority" era. This caused tremendous problems for me in religious life. Some see the questioning as disloyal. Others view it as discontentment with the congregation. It is neither. Questioning for my generation is not opposition but a necessary part of participation in the process. It is what keeps decisions and decision-makers honest. A comic defines these differences using the following captions: 1950 — question nothing, 1970 — question everything, 1990 — question questions, 2010 — enough questions. I imagine it is very difficult for those who were raised to question nothing to be with those who question everything. What they need to realize is that their attitude is only normative for their generation. As one of my peers in religious life put it, "They forget that we are asking questions because we simply want answers to things

we don't know." There was nothing wrong with me or my former congregation because I questioned everything.

Another huge generation gap in religious life is the attitude toward authority itself. The Silent Generation grew up trusting and respecting the authority of the GI Generation heroes, who made great sacrifices for a better world. Boomers challenged authority in the wake of an unjust and ill-conceived war and a corrupt presidency. For Xers this has progressed even farther — recognizing the legitimacy of authority not by the position one holds but by what the leader does with the power entrusted to her or him. The legitimacy of authority comes in walking the walk. For example, a bishop who abuses his power to protect sexual predator priests is less likely to be recognized as a legitimate authority by an Xer. Older generations would be more likely to continue to recognize the legitimacy of the bishop's power and authority simply because he is the bishop.

One of the biggest challenges for older religious in understanding this generation gap is in the attitude toward commitment. For Xers, commitment is a

Generation Xers have been called the 'lost generation' because no one tried to find them

myth. This makes sense. Xers grew up in a world that was deconstructing around them. Nothing was permanent, particularly not the lifelong commitment to love, honor and cherish another, as 50 percent of all new marriages ended in divorce. This is the generation that has avoided and delayed commitment. This poses a huge problem for young people entering religious life, with its demand for a commitment. Reluctance to making a commitment is viewed as a sign that one does not belong in the community or religious life, rather than the typical attitude of a generation.

Edgy Xers are nonconforming and fiercely individualistic. After all, they were the first generation of latchkey kids who, essentially, raised themselves. Frighteningly, this generation believes that its parents cared more about making money than about them. They have been called the "lost generation" because no one tried to find them. It has been said that during the height of the rise in juvenile crime, government officials decided that it was too late to save this generation and decided to save the next generation, the Millennials. This has proven to be true as Millennials enjoy 37 percent less free time than their Xer counterparts. Xers are more cynical and skeptical than are previous generations. It is important to note, however, that this cynicism is well born. Many of the things promised to Generation X, equal rights, universal health care and a "new economy" with limitless expansion, were not fulfilled. President Clinton is the symbol of this generation's cynicism. He promised so much and delivered so little. With the values and the norms of religious life, it would seem that edgy Xers don't stand a chance. Maybe that is why we

have looked for community in dot-coms and chat rooms more than in religious life.

The president of my former congregation frequently quotes the following saying: "We see from where we stand." No doubt, this is true. If religious communities are going to be open to the diversity and the complexity of new generations, which is vital to religious life, the dominant culture must be willing to see from where others stand. Congregations can see from where Xers stand and maintain their core values, which are equally essential to their survival.

Attitudes and values create a silent generational gap in religious life. As women religious work to welcome and embrace diversity, they must recognize that diversity comes in many forms. Because I look like you doesn't mean that I am the same as you. What is important to remember is that this is not about right or wrong, or good or bad, it is just about differences. When older (or younger) sisters place value judgments on these differences, it can be hurtful. When the dominant culture collectively makes a judgment about younger members in the community, it is oppressive.

The dominant culture can work to close the silent gap. First, as the dominant culture it must recognize its biases. Women religious have raised consciousness about the problems of patriarchy in the church and society. One of the sins of patriarchy is the belief that the male is normative and that females must be judged against this norm. This same principle applies in the generational divide. It is all too easy for the dominant groups in religious life to believe that they are normative, and that there is something wrong with someone who has a different way of seeing the world or solving problems. When a large group shares attitudes, behaviors and opinions, it is too easy to fall into the trap of believing that any deviation from the norm is deviant behavior. Unfortunately, there are too few Gen Xers in religious life for older religious to understand that their attitudes and behaviors are normative for their generation.

I believe that if members of religious communities were more aware of this silent gap, they would do something about it. My experience has been that women religious truly desire to be open to and welcoming of others from different cultures, different socio-economic statuses, and different faith traditions. I believe they desire to be equally open to different generations. The problem is one of awareness. It is my hope that religious communities, especially leadership teams, will recognize this silent gap, will understand that normative behaviors are defined by generations, not just by dominant groups, and will

begin to welcome fully the diversity of the next generations of religious life. The future of religious life depends upon it.

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Howe, N., and Strauss, W. *Millennials Rising*. New York, New York: Vintage Books, 2000.



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Lost in a World of Plenty

I was more than surprised when I saw that the final exam was on fire. I rushed to Joe's desk to smother the fire with a book.

"Why'd you do that, Joe?" I asked.

"Didn't know any answers," he said.

His behavior effectively ended final exam class as every eye in the room was on Joe and me. The desk in front of him was vacant, so I sat down sideways and turned to face him.

"Well, what do we do now?" I whispered.

"I don't care," he sighed. "I don't care."

Joe didn't need punishment. Although his face was the picture of innocence, his life had been a battlefield. For years he had been in a combat-ready stance with no relief for refreshing rest. He had been defeated by grief and despair. Only God knows for how long. Joe didn't care much about passing his final exam, but he cared enough to try to destroy the evidence of his failure.

He was just 15 years old.

I collected all the unfinished exams and finished the class with a discussion. I said I would give each student a grade for participation and insight. The students were jumping out of their seats to participate, evidently grateful that there was no written exam. Relieved that their classroom had not been incinerated. And, that their pal, Joe, was just sitting quietly.

After class Joe and I walked together to the school office.

The next week I visited him in the psych ward at the hospital. We didn't talk. We just walked up and down the halls. He didn't say he was glad that I was there, but he never asked me to leave him alone. I told him that I would be moving to another town in a week. I promised that I would be thinking of him and wishing him well. I have kept that promise for a long

time.

He was a lost soul. Well, who isn't? What separates me, and I suspect many of us, from Joe is simply degree. How does anyone truly find their way? How do I find my way in a world where countries are invaded for no clear reason? Where a father sends a pit bull after his son to teach him a lesson? Where the environment is evaporating around us, and at the same time unseasonable rains flood every valley? Where I hold the hand of my mother whom I have loved without measure and watch her die slowly and painfully? Where we have money for war as the elderly struggle to pay for medications?

Where the Church makes no sense and covers up its sins? Where the spirits of the young are beaten down by bureaucrats who pretend they care? How do I find my way in a world where bombs receive more attention than schools?

It surprises me that with all that I do not believe, I am not yet ready to give up on angels. And I need some angels here. Some guardian angels to keep me on the straight and narrow. To help me stay focused on the truth that I have been saved. If only from myself. If only from the fear of failure. Guardian angels to keep me from setting my dreams on fire. To help me protect my energy so that I stay on the path. So that I don't lose my way. So that I am not lost.

I have never been able to find out what became of Joe. I hope an angel found him and that he was able to recover his self. The self that was created for happiness and freedom. Freedom from being a lost boy in a world that never seemed to care.

— Sister Margaret Cessna, H.M.,
is a former high school teacher.

Faith in the Funny Bone

James Torrens, S.J.

Humoresque

There was once so serious a sister
she said no to the Sunday funnies.

When God plays a joke on you,
it is to make you laugh.

We look into the Fun House mirror
to enjoy ourselves in bad shape.

What fools these mortals be,
it brings tears to your eyes.

Didn't Jesus smile to himself
over the antics of his own!

The one time I sat on a jury the dispute was about wedding pictures. The story goes like this. The mother of the bride had selected a photographer because of his advertisement, "We will get you to your wedding in the Silver Cloud." The Silver Cloud was a vintage Rolls Royce. On the wedding day, a young man, a son of the photographer, was driving the bride and her uncle to church in this impressive vehicle, when something began to smell bad, and then smoke filtered into the car. "Oh, no!" the young driver exclaimed, "and I have another wedding after this one." "What about my wedding?" the bride shot back, understandably. A few minutes later she was out on the sidewalk in all her finery, near a busy intersection in San Jose. Her uncle, meanwhile, was in a phone booth getting someone to come pick them up in a Volkswagen van.

After the wedding Mass and at the reception, a photographer from the studio took a series of photos, as specified by the contract. But the drama escalated the following week, with the newlyweds storming into the studio screaming, and its feisty chief firing back. Then the newlyweds brought suit, which took a few years to get to court. The case absorbed a week's time of twelve productive people — engineers, nurses, a priest, etc. — though I think Judge Judy could have resolved it in twenty minutes. The verdict went to the

photographer. Seven males agreed that, however calamitous the breakdown of the Silver Cloud, the photos were decent, and the studio had fulfilled its contract. All five females on the jury thought the opposite — as Judge Judy herself might have done!

What a pity this young couple worked themselves into such aggravation and anger, when their wedding day produced such a great story. They could have been telling it and laughing about it for years and years! The event happened about fifteen years ago, so maybe by now they are doing so, but I wouldn't bet on it.

Which brings to mind the first bit of Shakespeare I ever learned: "What fools these mortals be!" It is the derisive judgment of Puck, that mischief-maker from the world beyond, in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The Hearst newspapers used the words as a banner for their Sunday funnies (just above the leadoff strip, "The Katzenjammer Kids," if I remember correctly). What fools indeed! Our follies, our miscues, our boners are a laughing matter. Laughter, the mysterious response that mostly resists sober analysis, is our saving grace. A smile, a chuckle, a hoot — that is a possible response to whatever awkwardness or incongruity or odd-coupling we perceive, to whatever painful surprise is sprung upon us.

To be human is to have a funny bone. That, I suppose, is why my father loved to hear my brother and me laughing when we were small. Whenever the humorous response slackens, mental health pays the price. A depressed person does not let many jokes get through. Laughter can improve physical health, too. This is the message broadcast by Norman Cousins, the well-known editor of *The Saturday Review*. In his battle against cancer, he used a heavy dosage of comedy and humor (replays of movie classics, audiotapes of comedians, etc.) as his recipe for recovery. It certainly beats chemotherapy!

Humor can play a saving role not just for individuals but for entire peoples suffering oppression and discrimination. The Irish witticism, the Jewish shtick, the African-American blues lyric or salty banter were all ways of turning painful conditions on their head.

In a balanced life, admittedly, there are sober moments enough and serious issues to face. A comic attitude is far from appropriate all the time. The person who always has to be having fun, or to make fun, or to turn everything into a joke, trivializes life. The time is by no means always right for laughing. Jesus says as much in the Beatitudes. Blessed are those who mourn the real ills of the world, the defeats of goodness, the untimely deaths. We are not called to

Humor can play a saving role not just for individuals but for entire peoples suffering oppression and discrimination

be among the mockers and the deflators of everything.

But Jesus was no killjoy. If we ask ourselves why the ordinary people, including small children, were so drawn to him, we know it couldn't have been a grim face or a severe approach. He must have had a light, encouraging, appreciative, smiling way with them. With his slow-witted disciples, too, such as the "Sons of Thunder," how much good-natured patience he must have exercised.

Jesus had serious business enough. He faced growing opposition and the prospect of violent rejection. But his sayings and responses, as recorded in the gospels, often have that bite of irony, that flash of incongruity, which belongs to the comic instinct. He remarked, for example, how we notice the speck in our neighbor's eye but not the beam in our own, and how reluctant a man is to get out of bed at night no matter who's rapping at the door, and how a king waging war becomes a champion of peace when he discovers he is outnumbered, and how cranky and hard to please children can be, and how, for some people, prayer amounts to a lot of babbling. We remind ourselves, too, that the Jesus of today is the Lord full of joy in his resurrection and anxious to communicate that spirit, his joyful Spirit, to each of us in our ups and downs.

World literature carved out a distinctive place for humor and exposed the humorless to shame.

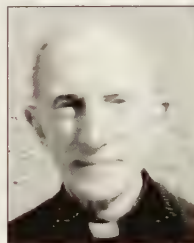
Malvolio in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, the steward of Lady Olivia, full of puritan disdain for her servants and court followers, gets a classic comeuppance from the toper, Sir Toby Belch: "Dost thou think because thou art virtuous, there shall be no more cakes and ale?" (Act II, Scene 3).

Or take Umberto Eco's weighty novel, *The Name of the Rose*. The plot turns upon a series of murders perpetrated in a monastery by the librarian, who doesn't want anybody to discover their great treasure, Aristotle's lost treatise, "On Comedy." The literary world has always longed for a companion piece to Aristotle's "On Tragedy," which is what allowed Eco to fabricate this story. But the insight Eco wants us to get is that, for a severe spirituality, no justification of the grosser pleasures — those that inevitably turn up on the stage — is acceptable.

Well, how about that? We know there are realms of the smutty and the raunchy that lie far outside the pale of decency, though people will dispute the boundaries of that pale. A fair number of people, for their entertainment, are fixated at the level of farce and bed-hopping. But aren't some of these grosser forms of humor — those that make hay of pratfalls and flatulence and the sexual itch — in their way testimonies to the spirit? The spirit, recognizing all the absurdity or strangeness of its being in the flesh, makes something amusing out of this contemplation.

Our klutziness and the waywardness of the flesh are part of the field of what's funny. Sometimes we need this tonic. It helps us remember who we are, understand where we come from.

Here is a concluding story. In the mid-seventies, Father Thomas Terry, S.J., president of Santa Clara University, determined to let the graduating students choose their own commencement speaker and honoree. They asked for "Trudeau." Dutifully Father Terry went ahead and invited Pierre Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada, an international leader. The Prime Minister politely declined. Then Terry discovered, as he afterwards told with a laugh, that the students really wanted Garry Trudeau, the cartoonist of "Doonesbury." That was their level of political awareness! Perhaps, after all, it was not such a bad one. As of today, the Prime Minister has long departed the stage, but "Doonesbury" persists.



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Support by Co-Workers Reduces Stress

A study of New York City traffic enforcement agents, certainly in a stressful job, provides strong evidence that support by co-workers reduces blood pressure. Men seemed to benefit more from support from co-workers at their own level, women more from support from their immediate supervisors. The study was conducted by William A. Karlin, Ph.D.,

Elizabeth Brondolo, Ph.D., and Joseph Schwartz, Ph.D., and published in *Psychosomatic Medicine* (Vol. 65, No. 2). It would seem that a work environment that encourages support, encouragement and constructive feedback lessens stress, a finding that has implications for those jobs where stress levels are high.

Nurturing Spiritual Experiences

Maureen Conroy, R.S.M., D.Min.

As leaders of various ministries of the Church, many readers of **HUMAN DEVELOPMENT** have the primary responsibility of helping people grow in a personal relationship with God. We provide opportunities for people to nurture spiritual experiences so that their life of faith can be lived out in a meaningful way. We strive to enable individuals to open themselves to the experience of God's overwhelming love for them. This article explores various dimensions, the interior process and the consequences of experiencing God and suggests practical ways to help people to be attentive to God's presence in daily life.

DIMENSIONS OF AN EXPERIENCE OF GOD

Our most profound and foundational experience in life is our experience of God. Some peoples' experience of God is focused primarily on traditional religious practices. Others' experience of God is grounded in everyday life and rooted in deep feeling, strong desire and lived experience. The experience of God can develop into a lively personal relationship that affects every part of one's inner being and outer life. This pervasive, heartfelt experience of God has various dimensions. It is comprised of the **Giver** — a self-communicating God — and the **receiver** — ourselves. The encounter and the ongoing interaction between

the Giver and the receiver always take place in an **outer and inner context** and results in **interior movements**.

God is constantly revealing Self to us from all eternity and in each moment of time. God's self-communication is the giving of divine love. "It is not that we have first loved God, but that God has first loved us." (1 Jn 4:10) God lets us know that God's love for us is unique and unconditional.

Experiencing God involves receiving God's self-giving — allowing God's self-communication to come alive in our hearts and lives. St. Bernard says: "God is life and power, and as soon as God enters in, my slumbering soul is awakened; God stirs and soothes and pierces my heart. . . . Only by the movement of my heart . . . did I perceive God's presence." The transcendent God becomes incarnate within us. God's presence, mediated through outer and inner realities, becomes immediate as God's touch awakens us. Through a contemplative stance, we can absorb God's loving touch, the way a sponge absorbs water. Contemplation simply involves taking time to stop, look at and listen to the God who is constantly offering the gift of divine love, and to allow that love to permeate our entire being.

God's communication of love occurs through an exterior context such as creation, scripture, the

God becomes real for us as we affectively respond to God's self-communication

sacraments, life circumstances and human relationships. It becomes alive in the interior context of our spirit, mind, imagination, spiritual senses, heart and body. Truths we have learned about God change to living realities in our experience. We not only come to know about God, but also grow to know God in a heartfelt way.

Terry, for example, prayed with a scripture verse, "I have called you my name. You are mine . . . and I love you." (Is 43:1, 4) She sensed God's desire to be with her and to enter into a personal relationship with her. She felt God saying that she was special and uniquely called by name. For many days, as Terry took the time to listen to God calling her by name, she was able to receive, to absorb God's love. God pierced her heart with love. She responded to God's desire to be one with her and allowed herself to bask in God's personal love for her.

INTERIOR PROCESS

God becomes real for us as we affectively respond to God's self-communication. God's self-revelation causes interior movements within us. At times we feel God's presence. St. Bernard says: "When I contemplate all these things I am filled with awe and wonder at God's manifold greatness." At other times we wonder if God has abandoned us: "But when the Word has left me, all these spiritual powers become weak and faint and begin to grow cold, as though you had removed the fire from under a boiling pot." Thus, as we experience God, at times we feel spiritual joy, peace, hope and a growing desire for closeness to God. At other times we experience restlessness, fear, lack of desire for God, resistance. Sometimes we surrender to God's self-giving, and other times we pull away because of feelings of unworthiness, anxi-

ety about what God's love might require of us, fear of intimacy with God, or many other reasons. This variety of interior movements reveals that a lively experience of God is stirring within us, and that a real relationship is growing.

Peter, for instance, an executive in a large company, often spent many hours a week caught up in the busyness of his job. On weekends, he would try to take a walk on the beach in order to slow down and gain perspective on his life. As he walked one day, he sensed the warmth of the sun beating on his back. He suddenly felt as though the warm sun was God the Father's tender hand resting on his back, reassuring him that God was with him in all moments of his week. Peter felt a surge of joy, peace and love for God that carried over into the weeks that followed. At various moments, when he would get too caught up in work and lose sight of God's loving presence, he would remember and relive that warm touch of God, which resulted in an inner calm and renewed sense of perspective.

Sandra, grieving over the loss of a close friend, struggled with trusting God and distanced herself from God. Always a person of strong faith and commitment to God, she experienced difficulty praying at this time in her life. Her spiritual director suggested that she pray with the scripture passage about Jesus weeping over Jerusalem. As she prayed with this event for several days, she sensed Jesus' aloneness, loss, anger and pain, and her own feelings of loneliness, emptiness, anger and inner anguish were stirred within her. As she shared these feelings with Jesus and continued to stay with Jesus' intense feelings, Sandra experienced a heartfelt connection with God again. She felt not only that Jesus was with her in her loss, but also that he understood the deep grieving she was undergoing. Her trust in God was renewed as she sensed Jesus compassionately present with her in her loneliness and loss.

CONSEQUENCES OF EXPERIENCING GOD

Experiencing God results in various changes in our inner and outer life. First, an experience of God increases our desire for God. "As a deer longs for running waters, so I long for you, O God. I thirst for God, the living God." (Ps 42:1, 2) The more often we allow ourselves to taste the Living Waters of God's presence, the more deeply we desire to become drenched in that Water of Life.

Second, as we allow ourselves to experience God's loving presence, our relationship with God deepens and becomes more real. We spontaneously share with

God the concerns and the burdens of our heart, as someone shares with a close friend. We allow ourselves to be more trusting of and vulnerable with God. We grow more aware of God in our daily life.

Third, our knowledge of God changes from a head knowledge to a heart knowledge, an “intimate understanding” of the truth, as St. Ignatius of Loyola would often say in the *Spiritual Exercises*. Dogmas and teachings about God become heartfelt insights into the heart and mind of God. Our faith takes on new meaning.

Fourth, conversion of heart, mind, attitude and behavior takes place. As we come to know and enter into the mind and heart of God, we change both interiorly and exteriorly. The fruits of the Spirit become operative in our hearts and lives. We grow more patient, gentle and loving in our family and work relationships. We experience greater peace and joy and begin to see the world from God’s point of view and not just from our limited perspective. Also, we become aware more quickly when we fall back into debilitating thoughts and behaviors, surrender these to God and ask God to transform our outlook and behaviors.

Fifth, experiencing God enables us to develop a discerning heart, that is, to notice more readily those realities that are drawing us closer to God and those that are moving us away from God. Our interior life deepens, so we are better able to “sift apart,” to “separate” (discernere) those matters that are consonant with God’s ways and life-giving and those that are not.

Sixth, experiencing God results in life-giving choices. As we integrate God’s outlook into the depths of our being, we naturally make decisions that are growth-producing and beneficial to others and ourselves. We look at the broader picture of God’s desires, our deeper desires and the needs of others, and not just at our self-centered needs. Therefore, our choices are made in love — love of God, others and ourselves.

Seventh, experiencing God often inspires us to celebrate God’s tremendous love in some concrete way, whether that be through a eucharistic liturgy, other sacraments or some creative expression, such as art, music or dance. The love we have experienced deep within we desire to express in a visible, concrete way.

In sum, as our experience of God unfolds, we realize how God’s presence permeates our personality, life circumstances and culture. We find God in all things as we enter into our relationship with God as a profound reality, not added onto but innate in our life experience. We vividly experience that our rela-

tionship with God does not unfold separate from, but in relation to our life circumstances and daily life. We realize deeply that God is present with us at all times and interested in all aspects of our life. Prayer, then, changes from something we do once in a while to an encounter with God in all aspects of life. The more we experience God in our life and world, the more concretely we find God in all things. The deeper we can respond to God’s touch in our innermost beings and life circumstances, the more integrated we become. We become a living expression of St. Irenaeus’ insight: “The glory of God is a person fully alive.”

WAYS TO HELP PEOPLE EXPERIENCE GOD

As disciples of Christ we can nurture individuals’ spiritual experiences in simple practical ways as well as in the traditional formal ways. We can encourage and suggest concrete ways to help others open themselves to God.

Creation. We can invite people to look at, listen to, taste, touch and smell the various aspects of creation — grass, trees, plants, birds, animals, sky, sun, stars, water. We can help them notice what self-revelation God intends through some reality of creation. Using our outer senses moves us from self-absorption to other-absorption and, therefore, creates the inner space to notice what God is revealing about divine life and love.

Scripture. We can encourage individuals to spend several days listening to God speak about the love of the Trinity through a Scriptural verse, such as:

I have called you by name, you are mine. You are precious in my eyes, and I love you. (Is 43:1,4)

Though the mountains leave their place and the hills be shaken, my love shall never leave you. (Is 54:10)

I have loved you with an everlasting love. (Jer. 31:3)

We can teach people how to savor these words, to repeat them interiorly at various times during the day.

Thankfulness. Meister Eckhart, a fourteenth century mystic, said: “If the only prayer we ever said was ‘thank you’, that would suffice.” We might help people to thank God for the many spiritual blessings and

concrete gifts God has given to them, such as, "Thank you, God, for my faith...for your love...for your presence in my life. Thank you, God, for each breath I take...for my family...for my job...for my health." People often get weighed down with the burdens and worries of life, and encouraging them to develop a grateful heart can help them to keep these worries in perspective and to grow more free interiorly.

Recollection. St. Teresa of Avila says: "Granting that we are always in the presence of God, yet it seems that those who pray are in God's presence in a very different sense; for they see that God is looking upon them, while others may be for days without even once recollecting that God sees them." We can teach people how to be aware of God's presence in their daily life in concrete ways, such as the following:

"At the beginning of the day, focus on God's presence and ask: 'God, how do you want to be with me today? Help me to be aware of your presence today.' Take a moment to notice God's response."

"During the day, pause and ask: 'Who are you for me right now? How can I be more loving in my relationships with and responses to others?'"

"At the end of the day, ponder how God was with you and ask: 'God, how were you with me today? When and why did I lose sight of you?' Listen to God, and ask God for a deepening awareness of God's presence in all aspects of your life."

Spiritual Direction. Spiritual direction, a growing ministry in the Church, helps individuals to grow in a personal relationship with God, to open themselves in specific ways to God's self-communication, and to become aware of God's presence in their life circumstances. Throughout the world many priests, religious and laypeople are entering into formal training programs for spiritual directors, which include supervision, reflection on the experience of offering spiritual direction and theological reflection. We can encourage people to enter into formal spiritual direction with a trained spiritual director in order to notice, savor and respond to God's movement in their

hearts and lives.

Faith Sharing. Sharing one's experience of God helps it become more real and alive and deep. Faith sharing provides people with the opportunity to reflect with others how God is moving in their heart and life. A sharing from the heart and not only the mind, it often comes from a deep personal place within. We can encourage people to participate in a faith-sharing group in which they can truly be themselves in their vulnerability and their strength.

These are a few practical ways that people can concretely open themselves to God's lively presence. There are many other ways. What is important is that we find the specific ways that can help others and ourselves grow closer to God in an affective, life-giving way.

As disciples of Christ in the Church in various capacities, we have not only the responsibility but also the privilege of helping people become more aware of God in their lives. In our ministry settings, we need to provide opportunities for others to discover, savor and enjoy their experiences of God. The responsibility and the privilege of nurturing individuals' spiritual experiences are implicit in our call to discipleship. By growing in the awareness of the meaning, dimensions and consequences of experiencing God, and practical ways to foster this experience, our implicit call can become explicit in our ministerial situations. We can more vividly become "salt for the earth and light for the world," (Mt 5:13,14) as we live out God's call to be witnesses to God's love in the world.



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Goals — Or Ideals?

George B. Wilson, S.J.

Big news. The new strategic plan for Holy Joy Church was proclaimed at Easter. Top priority: "Our goal is to love everyone as Jesus does." Projected completion date: Pentecost, 2006. At that point, after achievement of the parish's present goals, a new set will be proclaimed.

We need to be fair to the good folk at the imaginary Holy Joy Church. I believe that no parish would actually proclaim such a goal — especially with such a completion date. (Although some "strategic plans" come close.) There are, however, important things we can learn by unpacking that outlandish illustration.

ATTRACTIONS AND PURPOSES

Let's cut right to the chase: Just what is a goal?

Well, the very least we can say about it is that it is something attractive. We attend to it and organize our resources around it because we want it. It isn't realized yet; it exists in our human spirits. It is drawing us into a future state of being. We don't ordinarily use the language of "goals" to describe the continued existence of a present state. Keeping on keeping on may sometimes be all that one can do, but it hardly qualifies as being goal-oriented. What we call goals are descriptors of new states to be achieved by pur-

poseful activity. And it will, therefore, require change.

It is when we begin to use the language of attractions that a very significant new clarification becomes possible. For there are different kinds of attractors, and the differences have important ramifications.

The most power-filled attractors, it turns out, are infinite in scope. Love, justice, peace, harmony, human community. An atheist may not make the same connection, but these attractors are ultimately descriptions of the divine. Augustine's dictum, "our hearts were made for Thee," fits here. Corresponding to the deepest capacity and longing of the human heart there are realities that can never be reached in all their fullness while we are in our present human condition.

These realities are frequently called goals. That is because of their power to evoke a response from us. But assigning them the term "goals" can lead to unfortunate confusion, as we shall see, so for the moment let's give them the name "ideals." Some authors refer to them as ultimate imperatives, and that's okay, too.

It is an essential characteristic of an ideal that it is finally unreachable. It stands out in front of us. It arouses the energies of hope, excitement and even

passion in us. It is perhaps best imaged as a lovely mirage on our horizon: Ceaselessly calling us to set out to reach it, the oasis is also constantly receding from us. We may travel a long way in our efforts to reach it, only to discover that we are just as far from it as when we started out.

If we use the metaphor of place, ideals turn out to be Utopian: literally “no place,” “no where.”

RELIGION AND UTOPIA

One of the characteristics of religiously oriented people is that they are compelled by a vision of the infinite. It is one of the contributions of religion to social life that the religious impulse makes us restless in the face of what appears incomplete. The drive for infinity reminds us that the world of finite goods could be better.

We need ultimate imperatives. They can keep our spirits up. And it can be salutary to lift our eyes to them from time to time, to remind ourselves that as creations of an awesome God, we have infinity embedded in our finite bodies.

But the catch is that ideals, or ultimate imperatives — as desirable and as powerful as they are — are not goals. How can that be?

GOALS ARE SOMETHING ELSE

There are other future possibilities that can be very powerful because they are very attractive — and they can be reached. That places them in a different realm of reality than ideals.

In contrast to an ideal, a goal is concrete. It is specific, an embodied image. Where the language for ideals is abstract, the description of a goal has texture and edges. It is much easier to name our success in achieving a goal because we were able to describe it in focused terms when we set out to get to it. To say “our goal is justice in human relationships” is a very different thing from saying “we are striving to achieve an equitable balance between the salaries of our lowest employees and that of our CEO.” Both conditions are attractive, and endorsing either one still leaves much room to debate the measures that might move us toward it, but the goal is clearly of a different order from the ideal. Because the ideal is without boundaries, it is of less help in the task of focusing our human energies and saying no to other attractions that would dilute our efforts.

For in the real world of multiple attractions (what Ignatius of Loyola calls “creatures”), that is the issue, whether for an individual or a group. We need to set

a focus, which holds the desired good in the center of our consciousness and thereby relegates other quite laudable goods to the realm of “distractions.” When we have locked into a genuine goal we are better equipped to recognize that movement toward our goals requires using energies to limit the effects of other goods which lie “outside” our mission. They don’t cease to be attractive.

Movement toward a goal involves two simultaneous realities: a passion and a focus. If there is no passion, there will be no expenditure of scarce energies, and the trajectory of the past that has created our present will prevail simply by virtue of the law of inertia. On the other hand, if there is no focus, the passion of energy will be dissipated, scattered to the four winds with no discernible effect. Some goals are not reached because there isn’t enough drive to get us off our present course; others are not reached because no discipline harnesses the energies that have been aroused by the attraction.

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

Seen in this way, we are in a position to relate goal-setting to an incarnational view of human life. It is the essence of Incarnation that it involves acceptance of limits. “Though he was in the form of God, he did not deem equality with God something to be grasped at. Rather he emptied himself and took the form of a slave, being born in the likeness of men.” (Phil 2:7-7) Jesus lived and worked in Galilee, and so he couldn’t travel with the high muckety-mucks in Rome or Athens. He had to achieve his purposes with followers of low estate and limited comprehension. He did not cure every hurting person that came his way. He chose not to go immediately to the sickbed of his friend Lazarus. What he did do was to “set his face toward Jerusalem.” He knew exactly where he was headed and what needed to be addressed there. And he would not be deflected. He had a baptism with which he was to be baptized — and he was on fire until it was accomplished.

Developing an incarnational spirituality is not easy. It requires discipline to maintain the focus on the “one thing” in the face of the attraction of all those other competing goods. The seduction of the boundless ideal, the utopian infinite — and it is a seduction — is always at work. Utopian futility must be very engaging or we wouldn’t see so much of it. That’s why Jesus is a stumbling block: He offers a way of living, not an ideology.

At this point I have a confession to make. Eons ago I passed through a Jesuit experience called ter-

tianship. My confession is this: In spite of ten months of daily conferences from our tertian instructor, I can remember only one thing he said to us. "The greatest danger in the spiritual life is disillusionment." Disillusionment. A fascinating expression. How much of what at that time I would have called a goal in my life was actually a boundless illusion?

BUT WHAT ABOUT THE IGNATIAN MAGIS?

Careful, Wilson. The ice can be thin when one ventures onto a critique of something as centrally Ignatian as the *magis* the "greater." Actually the distinction between an ideal and a goal, far from lessening our commitment to the *magis*, may help us to understand the concept better and thus focus our efforts the way Jesus did.

It is an occupational hazard of religiously oriented people that because they have lofty ideals they are easily subject to perfectionism. There is always a more perfect outcome that might have been reached, and that fact works against valuing the limited good that could have been achieved. The result can be an immobilizing, Hamlet-like approach to life. The best is the enemy of the good, and so rather than risk failing to achieve the best, one doesn't act at all.

I believe the *magis* can be an enormously powerful impulse in one's spiritual life, as witnessed by the amazing things quite ordinary men and women have achieved under its attraction. But only if the "greater" remains firmly anchored in the real, the embodied, the incarnational. The "greater" cannot be allowed to be subtly morphed into the perfect, into a gnostic ideal floating on the winds of lofty rhetoric. (Need I say "mission statement" here?) In an incarnational spirituality, the "greater" always goes hand-in-hand with modesty, with humility. In short, with creatureliness. The First Commandment will always remain

the most difficult because we are not God and would like to be.

GOALS MAY BE QUITE PEDESTRIAN

There is a further difficulty in the very language of "goals." Even if we are clear that goals are not ethereal piety and require focus as well as passion, we can miss the point that the very scope of the goal might be quite modest. Because goals have been so very central in our conceptualizing of organizational effectiveness, it's possible that we have come to identify the term only with grandiose projects. It can be the expression of a genuine goal for a businessperson to say, "I've got to clear my calendar so I can play in the park with Billy on Saturday — or get to Emily's recital on Monday evening." All goals are not heroic. And, contrary to the rigidity sometimes brought to the table by professionals trained in management by objectives, some can't be quantified. In fact the pedestrian ones just may, as the ads remind us, be "priceless."

I'm sure we all encourage the people at Holy Joy to keep their focus on the star, which is Jesus. But all in all it's probably preferable if they set the goal of having healthier baked goods after the 11 o'clock Mass. Completion date: Next week. After that they could check and see which home-bound parishioners aren't even getting day-old donuts.



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Textures of Light and Darkness

Patricia R. Ashley

At a recent symposium of spiritual directors on the topic of spiritual darkness and light, I couldn't help but notice that speakers and participants alike were using the terms to describe a variety of human experiences. We were also making different, not explicitly acknowledged, assumptions about appropriate responses to darkness and light. Indeed, the Christian tradition has done so for millennia. Often, darkness calls out the tendency to counter it in some way with light.

This is a natural, primal response, for darkness makes us vulnerable and limits what we can know and do. The move to light may be done without benefit of prayer, reflection or wisdom. This automatic response may ignore the fact that sometimes darkness is best — that is, faithfully and lovingly — left to itself, embraced or savored. Given the harm that might be done or the opportunities for spiritual deepening that might be missed, we would do well to become more differentiated in our naming, more conscious of our assumptions and predispositions, and more varied in our repertoire of response. We do so in order to become more able to face the complexity of forces at work in our world with maturity. This is in contrast to being at the mercy of first or half-acknowledged impressions and preferences.

Faithfulness sometimes calls for light to be called

out; at other times we shine light; at still others, we bring it. In addition, darkness is not only to be illumined. There is a time to be still before its mystery, a time to notice both our fear and our welcome of it, a time to limit it, a time to embrace it. Light is not only for rejoicing, but also for stark exposure, punishing, healing and looking. For one person, the bare, bright lightbulb scares away the bogeyman. For another, it destroys privacy and rest.

In spiritual formation, the darkness of holy mystery can be mistaken for the darkness of evil. When enlightenment is necessary, the call might be to instruction in one instance, but searing purgation in another. The very first chapter of Genesis already suggests this intricacy and profundity. To be sure, God does get to the point of saying, "Let there be light." And God also broods over the chaos-void. As light enters the picture, it does not abolish darkness. Rather, we see God ordering the relationship between light and dark, assigning each its appropriate place in such a way that life-giving cycles and seasons are established. In Creation, there is, indeed, a time for everything. We are urged and empowered to become wise about which moment is which, and to become skilled in navigating amid the shadows and the flashes of inner and outer events.

There are several moves in our maturation con-

cerning light and darkness: 1) to notice and name the range of experience that has been articulated in terms of darkness and light; 2) to identify possible responses; 3) to claim ways of developing freedom and skill in living with darkness and light; 4) to practice an expanding repertoire of responses; 5) to reflect communally on our development, and 6) through the entire process to attend to how God is and what God is doing regarding our development. The purpose of this article is to focus on the first of these moves, with some preliminary suggestions regarding the second and the sixth.

There are at least four strands of darkness and light: Sin and goodness, suffering and wellness, mystery and the nuances of absence and presence. When we attend to the rich textures of light and dark, we are able to move and change both with the movements of events and with the movements of the Spirit.

SIN AND GOODNESS

One strand is sin and goodness. Here, darkness is the experience of being off the mark in relationship with God. Within this wrongness there are multiple textures of darkness. One is ignorance. We simply don't know what constitutes right relationship, or we don't know to want it, or we don't know how to get there from our clueless state. So a faithful response might be to seek wisdom in prayer, to pursue instruction or to attend to scripture. Other types of response to darkness, which might be appropriate in other situations, might not prove very fruitful with ignorance: judgment, punishment or embrace, to name a few. Ignorance might be so terrified of judgment or punishment that it cannot be taught. Or, it might be made complacent by an untimely embrace, however comforting. Development entails gaining skill in discerning which approach might be most fruitful and applying it with finesse.

An even more murky aspect of sin is unconsciousness. We don't even recognize the ways in which we ignore God, try to be God, or defy God. Behavior lifted up as common sense may be more selfish than useful. When self-care crosses the line to mere "looking out for number one," we may not even notice the movement or the spiritual danger we're in. Certain goals can be mistaken for rights when, in fact, there is no communal agreement that gives them such a status. A vigilante may feel justified without even recognizing the risks inherent in individually determined judgment.

Awakening is the primary faithful response to unconsciousness. We bring light when we sound

wake-up calls for one another. We seek light when we realize that we are always subject to unconscious forces and become intentional about ferreting out the ones to which we are especially vulnerable. When we are willing to engage in self-examination, not only as a means to uncover our motivations, but also to seek the fresh possibilities, we lend ourselves to God's forming. Spiritual direction is one tool for our development, particularly in regard to bringing what is unconscious to awareness. Because we may be as oblivious to God's love as we are to our own limitations, it is a discipline that can serve us in vital ways, if we would be faithful.

A quite different darkness in sin is our knowledgeable indulgence in self-serving. It can happen that we know perfectly well that we are being egocentric, and we go ahead with it anyway. In this instance, illumination comes through confession, repentance, forgiveness and restitution. Some of us will be best served by confrontation, others by a pointed question. Part of our development in this arena is to sort out which response might actually work in favor of conversion, rather than applying a personal preference or a particular doctrine indiscriminately.

Nathan told a story to David, which made it possible for Nathan to reveal David to himself (I Samuel 12:1-7a). Prophets regularly announce, in effect: "You are wrong. I'm going to tell you how, and I'm going to tell you what to do about it." Jesus calls down woes at one point (Matthew 23), and far more quietly enjoins accusers to let the sinless one cast the first stone (John 9:7) at another. When we notice self-indulgence in another, we do well prayerfully to consider our own role regarding it. We are also wise to become aware of what works to get our attention to our own selfishness, and to seek out that help occasionally.

Confusion is another form of darkness. Confusion may be benign, dangerous or inviting to good. It is benign when we're not certain what's going on or what to do, but we can find out and are willing to do so. Here, the murkiness is temporary.

Confusion is dangerous when we are not able to distinguish between what is life-giving and what is life-draining. Sometimes, we may mistake obsession for conviction or rigidity for loyalty. Jesus named the confusion inherent in Peter's rebuke, following Jesus' predictions of suffering and death, "satanic" (Mark 8:33). One danger is that when confusion becomes an end in itself, it draws us into sin. We try to figure it out, when we would do better to listen for wisdom. We hold to the puzzle, allowing the tension to keep pulling on us because we don't want to make a decision, or we don't want to live with the consequences. Mathilda doesn't know if she should end her relation-

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available information
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ship with Sergio or forgive him — so she keeps stringing him along. If she forgives him, she forgoes the satisfaction of vindication. If she parts from him, she relinquishes her power over him and closes the door on real reconciliation. Staying confused has its reward, albeit a dismal one. The moment she allows her confusion to turn her to God, it is already turning her to the light, and if she continues to desire the path of love, she will find a way to proceed that she has not yet imagined.

Another danger of confusion is that we can mistake it for mystery. That is, we allow the natural humility that washes over us in the face of large and complicated events to deteriorate into being merely overwhelmed. We may let the stringency of what is required in times of uncertainty paralyze us rather than serve as a call to stay the course. Appropriate awe may be reduced to preoccupation with our own survival. Sometimes we fail to act in the name of not wanting to be presumptuous, when it would be more honest to say we just don't want to be involved.

At other times confusion becomes the opening to new understanding. As the early church found itself befuddled in the face of gentiles who, having encountered the good news of Jesus Christ, desired to worship God, there was a period of confusion. This led to the Council of Jerusalem described in Acts 15, in which the accumulation of experiences that had resulted in tension were offered for communal attention. The gathering found a way of moving forward that had never before been publicly articulated. The strained bewilderment of disciples on the road to Emmaus was fertile ground for them to become able to recognize the risen Lord as he broke bread with them. The puzzlement of disciples who shared in

Jesus' ministry gave rise to their questions. As they attended to Jesus' responses over the course of their time with him in the flesh, they got better at understanding the workings of the Kingdom of God, and they became more organically motivated by the will of God.

When we attend to confusion for purposes of discernment, of knowing how God is in and with it, then it is rendered harmless and generally gives way fairly readily to new understanding. The discernment process, then, is the essential light with this form of obfuscation. As we attend to the available information and our own reactivity with a desire to hear God's voice, we grow in faithfulness. Such formation necessitates our development at several levels. We need to develop the will to turn to God early and intentionally in times of unknowing. We need to practice the discipline of discernment. We need to foster our expectancy that when we open to divine guidance, God engages with us in the way we most need.

Then there's evil — a quality of darkness that is absolute and intractable. Appropriate behaviors when facing evil include renouncing it, refusing it and binding it. The tolerance and exploration that are most helpful in other forms of sin don't do any good in confrontation with evil, and they run the risk of perpetuating injustice and harm. Over the generations, the Church has been confused about this when it comes to sexual misconduct. Now, however, we are learning that there is a place in God's realm for an unequivocal and public "No." These days, the sense of urgency for gaining facility with this means of faithfulness is growing more widespread and so more effective. The fact that firm standards and blunt pronouncements have a place in loving faithfulness comes as news to many, and the integration of this insight has only begun. Collectively, we will require considerable formation in very pragmatic ways in order to establish safety from interpersonal violation as a way of life together.

It seems evident that this formation to say "No" took place in hothouse fashion on United Airlines Flight 93 on September 11, 2001. This flight crashed in the fields of Pennsylvania. We know some of what made a different scenario possible for this flight than for those flights that crashed into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, and we would be wise to be informed by the event. Some people on Flight 93 knew of the destruction of the other buildings and so were able to consider their own place in a terrorist orchestration. They could become clear that this was not a matter of hoping for rescue, talking their captors out of it, or changing a heart. They were able to determine the entrenched nature of the darkness at

work. They also had an opportunity to know what was at stake: hundreds of other lives, the possibility for the world to know for certain that terrorism need not win the day, an opportunity for personal integrity and self-sacrifice in the service of good. They surely had some leaders able to plot and implement a course of action. And they had enough unity of purpose. The rest of us do not have to wait for a crisis to be formed for such freedom. We can do the inner work that makes it possible to say “No” to evil while acting from love. We can make commitments to act in favor of others’ lives, and we can practice doing it in our daily lives so that we are ready when terrible surprise happens. We now know more clearly together that this formative work is vital for us all.

Goodness, then, may come in the form of exploration, awakening, truth-telling, invitation, paying attention or nay-saying. Gaining facility with knowing “how to be good when” is a developmental process, the nuances of which will differ from person to person. The person who loves to be honest may need some work in learning how to ask an evocative question in the situations where their undistilled honesty may be experienced as a bludgeon. The persons who favor observation will have to practice offering what they see in ways that inform others. Those who delight in openness will have trouble honoring boundaries, where legalists will find it difficult to savor the goodness of emergent new understanding. A cultural bias in favor of giving everyone their due may fixate our formation, keeping us from challenging immaturity to grow up.

SUFFERING

Another strand of darkness is suffering. There is the pain itself, whether physical, mental, emotional and/or spiritual, that obscures everything in anguish. It can come from injury, disease or deformity. There is also the injustice inherent in most suffering. This is a darkness of its own. Then there is the resentment or dread or rage that often accompanies pain, blotting out the possibility of right relationship, for there simply is no will or energy left over for it.

Healing, of course, is the light of choice to illuminate the darkness of suffering. Trying to gloss it over, or not believing it can really be that bad, or expecting the sufferer to gut it out and not to bother people is a temptation. But healing is the thing: repair and restoration, if possible. If not, acknowledgment, accompaniment and therapeutic relief. Healing occurs when the source of pain is identified and addressed. It may need to be excised, soothed or

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accepted. Part of healing involves bringing the suffering out in the open. This may entail asking for help both personally and communally. That is, we want the pain to go away — and we also want it acknowledged and steps taken so that it doesn’t happen again.

There’s something more — which is only available to those who suffer, and must never be imposed from without. Sometimes those who suffer find blessing in the pain itself. An inner freedom not to be driven by it, perhaps. Or the way in which one’s own suffering might be able to keep others from suffering. Or the formation it offers for humility or patience or prayerfulness. Sometimes suffering can take people beyond themselves, thereby actually becoming, through God’s gracious transformation, a means of goodness.

MYSTERY

Sin and suffering are two of the spiritual realities that have been named “darkness.” The term has also been applied to mystery, which is another realm altogether. It stands at odds with our reflexive tendency to want to bring light to darkness. The beauty of mystery is not in its cessation, but at the heart of its opaqueness. Mystery in scripture and in mystical experience has to do with what is hidden and what becomes revealed.

One kind of mystery is the mystery of formation: the sprouting of a seed beneath the ground, the gestation in the womb that gives way to birth, the transformation that takes place within the cocoon. Darkness is a necessary good for these processes. If we dig up the seed — even to find out how it’s doing

— there will never be a green plant. Breaking open a cocoon before its time ends the inchoate life within. The darkness may be experienced as frustrating, over-long or frightening. It takes development to recognize that such sensations do not make the darkness bad.

A related mystery is that which awaits the moment of readiness: the mystery of Christmas presents and surprise parties, the mystery of marital consummation, the mystery of first times (like the initial time behind the wheel of a car or the first day at a new job). It simply is the way it is. We can't know until we know. Every child learns that it takes formation really to savor the wrapped birthday gift. It also takes development in order to endure first-time jitters, with an underlying trust that we are beloved no matter how it turns out, and that we have prepared for the arrival of this very moment. There are people who live in a constant frenzy of anxiety and jumping the gun because they fail to do what is necessary to grasp the essential goodness of this kind of darkness.

There is the mystery of the unknown. We don't know what death is like experientially, even if we trust the insights of faith concerning our eternal life. We don't know what the future holds or what a stranger is thinking. When faced with tough dilemmas, we don't know what to do until insight dawns. We don't know the meaning of suffering until it breaks over us. Sometimes such darkness can be met only with acceptance — and that capacity most assuredly demands development. Sometimes it requires discernment — that painstaking attention to the blankness itself in order to see what God writes upon it through the instrumentation of our emotions, intellect, body and imagination.

THE WHOLLY OTHER

One more mystery: that of the Wholly Other — the divine reality, which is beyond conception, yet invites relationship. It is no mistake that scripture knows that encounter with Holy Mystery induces fear, and that we continue to use the word even when our survival of these meetings changes it to awe. This mystery is dark indeed, for human language cannot articulate, nor mind comprehend it. Yet it is the encounter for which we most profoundly yearn. Some of the darkness of it is that, nevertheless, we spend vast amounts of energy avoiding it. The fear is primal, for it is the dread of annihilation. It takes development to experience that fear, wait it out and let it engage our mind. It is the ability to think and make choices that makes it possible for us to remember millennia of experience that confirms that death

is rarely the outcome of such encounters, that God consistently acts for the well-being of God's creatures, and that love is the abiding invitation. When fear is added to the impulse to take things into our own hands, the darkness is indeed dreadful. Still, meeting the Other is the point of Creation.

Fostering the capacity for humility, courage and adoration is the call to people of faith. Maturity is being aware of our desire for God, persisting through the fearsome times and gaining the capacity to withstand the Uncanny through discovering the love permeating it. It turns out that the darkness here is the blinding white light of unmediated revelation. But how could we know that unless we are formed to recognize it?

ABSENCE AND PRESENCE

Another strand of darkness: the subtleties of absence and presence. Scriptures tell us that the Lord departed from Saul (I Samuel 16:14), and that Ezekiel witnessed the glory of God withdrawing from Jerusalem (Ezekiel 10). Jesus' death left his disciples bereft, and he himself prayed, "Why have you forsaken me?" He walked away from Nazareth when his neighbors would stone him. He took off from Capernaum when fans would use him for their own purposes. Thomas lived with Jesus' absence the week following his presence with other disciples. Although hindsight or distance from the event assures us of God's activity, even in such moments, they are experienced as absence. God no longer worked in partnership with Saul, but rather despite him for the sake of God's people. Divine departures are not the last word, but they are a stark word. When God makes such choices, failure to place confidence in God is as bleak as the departure itself. While God often speaks, comforts, guides, intervenes or beckons, sometimes God's move with us is silence.

There are times when absence is explicit between God and ourselves. Other times, we experience dryness, even when we are certain of God's steadfast love. In our daily life, we must often be absent from people we love. Sometimes we are lonely and isolated. We may be out on a limb for a just cause, or left to our own devices. We may remove ourselves from the swirl of common activity. In such moments, God's presence may be difficult to apprehend.

There is another set of movements, which the accumulated experience of the community of faith tell us are experienced as absence, while they are actually formative shifts to radically new ways of apprehending God. The dark night of the senses and the dark night of the soul are inner transformation,

which we are unable to notice as they are taking place. We only recognize them when we emerge from them, changed. The community of faith has learned to wait these times out with gentle contemplation, but being personally formed to do so requires our attention and commitment.

These varied experiences of absence are best met with varied responses, and our ability to know what's really going on requires our careful examination and our building of spiritual muscle. Suppose Saul had been able to acknowledge the Lord's departure as appropriate, given Saul's lust for power. He could have received it as justice — although it would have required major inner work for him to do so. Suppose he had become able to acknowledge God's choices concerning him as God's prerogative, whether there were any humanly discernible reason for it or not. Then God's departure might be an occasion, not for madness, but for contrition, humility and praise for the mighty power of God. Sometimes Samuel tried to guide Saul into this light, but it was so unfamiliar that insanity often took over.

Suppose Jerusalem had been able to grasp that the removal of glory is not the same as divine disinterest, and had been able to develop a taste for starkness and for steadfast love that bided its time for manifestation? Suppose disciples had trusted God more than they trusted their own reactivity to crucifixion? They might have watched and waited in peace. They might even have savored how fitting the darkness of Christ's absence was in the face of the appalling injustice of crucifixion. They might have received the placement of his body in the tomb as a cocoon, holding all of them safe until the time came again — and we know it would be soon — to get on

with salvation. Such possibilities often do not occur to us, and even when they do, they require enduring exercise and a continued eye for ever-fresh understanding in order to become a way of life. It is the way of life for which we are called into being.

God's light is manifested in myriad ways. In the face of oppression, God quickens compassion, empowers protest, inspires justice. When we open our eyes, we notice the shining light of God's love, and we bask in it. We are well formed when our responses are as multifaceted as are the manifestations. Then, the light of the just cause does not distract us from the light of dawning affection, or vice versa. We can become spiritually sure-footed as we tread among the panic, wonder, resentment, exploration, resistance and interest that we meet in our daily walk. We can also appreciate the particular offerings of others in community. When we do, spotlights are available when we need them most, but we can ask them to give way to romantic candles when the moment shifts. We are mature when we appreciate the array, cherish our own favorite ways with light and dark, and open to lightning bolts, eclipses and everything in-between.



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Light in a Time of Darkness

Kenneth J. Hughes, S.J.

A few days ago as I finished this article, amidst the onslaught of war, we stepped quietly into spring. Day now outlasts the night. The sun lingers as long as it did back in mid-September. We see the budding and feel the promise of new life. But when I began to write in late February, cold chill had not yet left my bones; snow still swirled around the trees and the chimneys outside my window. And darkness prevailed: the darkness of the night, the darkness of imminent war, the darkness of continuing church scandal, the darkness of budget cutbacks affecting the poor and the elderly. All this darkness was seeping into my prayer and the prayer of those who came to see me for spiritual direction. How often I heard: "I'm tired of winter." Or, "Doesn't Bush have a clue of what he is unleashing?" Or, "The hierarchy still doesn't get it."

In session after session I have listened to people express vulnerability, helplessness and frustration; I have heard strong feelings of anger, fear, shame. The darkness, which began back on September 11, 2001, increased January 6, 2002, when the Church scandal in Boston broke into the news. It intensified in November with the movement of U.S. troops toward Iraq, and finally engulfed us horribly with the outbreak of the war in Iraq. As with winter, we tend to look at darkness negatively, as something to pass

through. Winter is just a prelude to spring, we say; darkness only a prelude to light. We want all this world and church darkness to pass away. In fact, we can be resentful of a darkness thrust upon us, especially by those whom we trusted most.

In this article I will explore a little this darkness and how the ministry of spiritual direction offers light to and in this darkness. I hope I can present enough to prime the pump of your own stories, to give you an opportunity to reflect, to acknowledge your own feelings, the sorrows and the joys that you have felt as you accompany others through these dark times on their journey. Very simply, I want to do two things: 1) explore the darkness of the present time, and 2) explicate aspects of bearing light.

THE DARKNESS

Darkness, of course, can be literal or metaphorical, total or relative. Darkness can have a different feel as one enters the darkness, becomes immersed in the darkness or is about to leave the darkness. Darkness can be physical, psychological or spiritual.

Have you ever really had an experience of being totally enveloped by darkness? It is quite rare. Light has a way of creeping around the edges of doors and through keyholes into the best and remotest of hiding

places. Our eyes, adjusting to darkness, gradually glimpse shades and shadows. Only once, do I remember total darkness. One day, three of us had descended into a cave in rural Jamaica, had traversed a very long tunnel, and arrived at a lofty chamber. Someone got the bright idea of shutting off the only flashlight among us so as to experience total darkness. Total it was! And to this day, I can still feel the panic inside me that the light would not come on again.

This year, I have had sessions with directees and retreatants when their darkness has seemed as complete as mine was and their panic as strong. My cave experience has certainly helped me appreciate the strength of the fear they might be feeling in their darkness.

Since the church scandal broke with fury fifteen months ago, many of us who are spiritual directors or engage in other pastoral work have encountered in our people the darkness of abuse: physical, psychological and, most deeply, sexual. Until victims began to speak up, many had pushed their sexual abuse secret so far down it became invisible to them even as the secret turned their life into turmoil. Through the voices of other victims, they finally began to hear similar faint cries from a devastated child deep within. Perhaps you have heard people say to you, "This is the first time I am telling anyone this. ..." and add, "It happened 30, 32, 38 years ago..." With the telling, the darkness of secrecy erupts into the darkness of rage, fear, guilt, and settles into that most murky and pervasive darkness: shame. For shame knows no boundaries and points a thousand accusatory fingers at the victim, fingers that imply, "You, too, were to blame."

As the darkness of abuse and the darkness of cover-up have been brought to light, we are seeing more clearly the prevalence of other abuses: betrayal by the hierarchy, rejection of women, silencing of the voice of dissent, distancing of the laity, oppression of life and creativity, and even darker clouds of suspicion and accusations. These make everyone, clergy and laity alike, watchful, afraid and mistrustful. Already repressive ecclesiastical forces have gathered to allocate blame, stifle searching questions and tighten the reins of control. Darkness indeed! And who of us does not feel it? Who of us does not hear constant cries of dismay and discouragement from our people? And all of the above is taking place within the context of a greater darkness hovering over our world as our country drops thousands of bombs that will ultimately kill even more thousands of innocent people and tear apart the fragile fabric of united efforts toward global peace.

But the worst darkness of all is spiritual darkness when, in the midst of these other darknesses, God

seems so distant, absent, helpless, even the One deemed responsible for our pain, my pain.

Poetic voices have expressed this pain well: The psalmist and Jesus himself cried out: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Gerard Manley Hopkins wrote: "What hours, O what black hours we have spent/ This night," and added, "But where I say/ Hours I mean years, mean life. And my lament/ Is cries countless, cries like dead letters sent/ To dearest him that lives alas! Away."

Perhaps the strongest expression of this darkness, and the one that John of the Cross quoted to express the darkness of the soul, comes from chapter three of Lamentations (verses 1, 2, 6-9):

I am a man who knows affliction
from the rod of his anger,
One whom he has led and forced to walk
in darkness, not in the light;

He has left me to dwell in the dark
Like those long dead.
Even when I cry out for help,
He stops my prayer,
He has blocked my ways with fitted stones,
And turned my paths aside.

Here is a darkness deeper than church scandal, sexual abuse and a nation blindly waging war.

BEARERS OF LIGHT

I suggest four aspects of light-bearing for our consideration.

1) To acknowledge and stay with our own darkness.

The German theologian, Jürgen Moltmann, once said, "Only the person who has suffered can help other sufferers." I say, "Only the person who has experienced darkness can help others in darkness." By "experienced" here I mean staying with, working through one's own darkness into light, and coming to see that in the darkness lies a treasure of grace.

My first real encounter with darkness came with the fire that destroyed the Jesuit house of studies where I was in my third year. The tragic fire itself that killed four Jesuits, the loss of my home, the immediate separation from most of my classmates two days later catapulted me into a depression that lasted for almost a year. Day by day, I plodded along, mostly in fog and darkness, sometimes grabbing onto false lights along the way. The journey was long, with very, very little help. Oh, if only I had someone who could hold that darkness with me! But eventually I emerged

through grace into the sunlight a new and stronger person. Later, in some mysterious way, I knew that my mission to Jamaica was a grace, a treasure, hidden in that darkness.

I also saw that my ministry of spiritual direction has depended much on that experience of darkness and my journey into light. If I had not persevered in exploring my own darkness, I might, when confronting the darkness of others, be tempted by the two F's: flight or fascination.

Flight is running away from the darkness of my directee either by not listening or trying to deny, or diminish, or fix the darkness. Recently, a director dismissed a confusing event of a friend of mine by saying that she was being influenced too much by the Church scandal. Because of that dismissal, she carried her darkness needlessly for several more months. Fascination can be either exploring the darkness of another as a substitute for looking at my own darkness, or staying with darkness because I am afraid of the light. One directee once admitted to me that while she feared the darkness of depression, she feared even more the light that might burst upon her. At least the darkness was familiar! I certainly have met spiritual directors who were, unwittingly, more attracted to darkness than light. For, surely, intimacy with God/Jesus can be a blinding and scary light!

2) To hold the darkness of those who speak with us.

People in darkness want and need us to hold their darkness. Trauma victims never really get over their trauma. Their story needs to be told in fragments over a long period of time to someone, perhaps to a spiritual director as well as to a therapist. These victims need us to accept their fragmented, even repetitious, stories, stay patiently with them and look for subtle changes. We may have to hold the story a long time before victims can trust enough for that needed conversation with God. We are an important part of that growing trust.

In the holding, the victim finds self and story accepted with reverence and care. In the holding, we help strengthen desires to seek light, to approach God. In the holding, we might also ask, "What else is happening in your life these days?" For darkness is not always the whole picture, and points of light appear in strange places, e.g., one person buys a cat, another stops to look at a spring flower, a third contacts a former caring teacher by e-mail.

A good image of holding comes from the warehouse fire a few years ago in Worcester that killed six firemen. For the week afterwards we saw pictures on TV night after night of fellow firemen sifting the ashes for the treasure of the bones of their dead com-

rades. Some of our directees need us to help them sift the ashes of their life to find the treasure, too. That takes time and patience.

3) To engage the imagination. We pay attention to the imagination as a place of change and hope. God uses the imagination to glimpse and fashion a future different from the past. In the darkness, what does a person see? Any point of light? What does a person feel? Alone? Another presence? Sometimes I have asked, "Can you give me a word or image to describe where you are right now?" Responses can be quite revealing: e.g., "angry but grounded," or "descending a deep well but I sense that God is at the bottom waiting for me." One directee spent two years walking along a tunnel, first sloping downwards, then upwards. Faithfully, every two weeks, he came, and some tiny aspect of the tunnel changed each time that gave him encouragement to keep walking until he finally emerged into the sunlight of freedom. For the first time, he said that he could make a free choice for his future.

For myself, darkness, imagination, creativity live in very close companionship. Perhaps the Jewish community would agree because the most creative, poetic, stirring literature came out of the long darkness of the Exile.

4) To keep an eye on Jesus. Jesus is the one who knew darkness from inside, from the desert to the cross and glory. In Jesus, God is exposed to a darkness similar to ours, even to the darkness of abandonment. Some people, of course, have a problem with a God, who, at worst, seems not to care or, at best, seems helpless to do anything. "Where was God when...?" "Where is God now...?" Many, too, have a problem with Jesus, a masculine image of God, who can remind victims of a male abuser and can remind women of ministerial rejection. Yet, ultimately, a God who has suffered and does suffer with us, alone makes suffering tolerable, significant. As a director, I sometimes sense Jesus standing in the wings, wanting to come on stage but waiting for an invitation. Sometimes, the director is the one who helps clarify the invitation. And sometimes, too, in the darkness, instead of Jesus responding to a directee's suffering, Jesus might want the directee to share his suffering, his passion, his abandonment. Jesus seeks a heart to companion his heart. Are we sensitive to this change of focus, of movement?

In his *Review for Religious* article, "Experiences of Darkness in Directed Retreats," William Connolly, S.J., wrote: "... that a strong desire to share the mission of Jesus to the world does not develop without a

prior experience of darkness." Helping the directee or retreatant through a time of darkness can well be one of those precious moments when we most work with Jesus in his mission of the Kingdom. Recently, I told my own spiritual director that four times in the past few months I had felt particularly useful. By that I mean that people were coming to me to talk out some pretty heavy stuff, lots of confusion, some grim darkness. I felt very helpful, very useful. My director suggested to me that at those moments God might be highlighting for me clearly my collaboration with God. I laughed because I suddenly remembered saying to God one of those times, "You know, you make me look pretty good. Thank you." And I thought I heard a quiet reply, "You make me look pretty good, too!" I guess that I have never felt so useful as at the present time and in my present ministry because with so much darkness there is so much need for light. I feel so blessed! Is that your experience, too?

With these thoughts for pondering, I close. But, my final line comes from Ps. 139.12. The psalmist

says to God: "Darkness is not dark for you and night shines as the day. Darkness and light are but one." Truly, the mystery of God touches darkness as well as light, and, in a way we do not know, they are one.

RECOMMENDED READING

William J. Connolly, S.J., "Experiences of Darkness in Directed Retreats," in David L. Fleming, S.J., Ed. *The Best of the Review-1* (St. Louis: *Review for Religious*, 1983, 108-114).



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Are the Elderly Less Troubled?

Are our images of the elderly as depressed, lonely and confused true to life? Some recent studies raise questions about these stereotypes, according to a report by Etienne Benson in *Monitor on Psychology* for June 2003. It seems that with age, people tend to focus more of their energy on emotional goals, e.g., on preserving relationships, and less on instrumental goals, e.g., on a career. In addition, the older one is the more likely one will forget or repress negative emotions and remember positive ones. One of the researchers, Susan Turk Charles, Ph.D., is cited. She maintains that it's not so much that positive emotions increase as that negative emotions "decrease in importance and impact across the life span." Another study of elderly nuns tends to confirm Charles' conclusion. Quinn Kennedy, Ph.D., of the Veterans Affairs Palo Alto Health Care System, found that the oldest nuns studied, between 79-102 years old, tended to give more positive spin to their past than did younger nuns, between 47 and 65 years old. Whether these results are the result of cognitive decline, as some researchers suggest, or can be attributed to the relative well-being of

elderly people is disputed by the researchers cited in the article. But Laura Carstensen, Ph.D., of Stanford University, believes that the evidence suggests that older people are doing much better than the stereotypes indicate. (Reported in *Monitor on Psychology*, June 2003, pp. 24-25.)

It seems that some personality characteristics improve with age. A study of 132,515 adults between the ages of 21 and 60 indicates that conscientiousness and agreeableness get better with age. Conscientiousness, i.e., showing organization and discipline, increases throughout the age range studied, with the greatest changes happening in one's 20s. Agreeableness, marked by warmth, generosity and helpfulness, showed the most improvement in the 30s and continued the upward curve thereafter. So it may be that we do improve with age. The study's principal investigator was Sanjay Srivastava, Ph.D., of the University of California, Berkeley. The results are published in *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* (Vol. 84, No. 5).

BOOK REVIEWS

Faith Formation and Popular Religion, by Anita de Luna, MCDP. New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2002. 205 pp. \$26.95.

Anita de Luna, a Missionary Catechist of Divine Providence and professor of religious studies at Our Lady of the Lake University in San Antonio, has produced an original, cutting-edge reflection on the nature of religious formation in Latino contexts. Deeply rooted in her distinctive Tex-Mex culture, De Luna combines historical, pastoral, theological and personal strands in naming what has been learned about the faith formation of Latinos. Her study reinforces the conviction of many current researchers that Latino Catholicism is actually a brilliant synthesis of faith and cultures, one that is certainly not perfect, but nevertheless worthy of great respect.

The introduction and first chapter reflect the author's grounding in a contextual methodology. She links the catechetical task with people's experience — in this instance with their practice of popular Catholicism. De Luna goes beyond that, however, and shows how the historic catechesis of Latinos going back to their first evangelization in the sixteenth century was also part of the deeper way of life. The rich fabric of public and home-based rituals and celebrations constitute a spirituality, one that finds its origins in the stunning religion of the Aztecs and other native peoples of the Americas. Following the lead of contemporary Latino/Latina theologians, the author also detects a strong orientation toward beauty, an aesthetic drive, in Latino catechesis and popular religion. She reviews the various catechetical texts used over the centuries and discovers how they promote a vibrant spiritual vision that combines with the people's popular religious expressions — or sometimes clashes with them.

An important theme throughout is the need to integrate the people's deeply felt religiosity and spiri-

tuality with the doctrines of the Church. Interestingly enough, modern catechetical texts (that is, those produced from the nineteenth century onward) sometimes showed less regard for the people's religion than did the more ancient ones.

Another important contribution in this text is the portrayal of the work of women religious in the advancement of the people's faith. The untold story of her own congregation and others that heroically labored in the rough conditions of the Southwest needs to be communicated to current and future generations of committed religious educators. While church historians such as Moisés Sandoval, Robert Wright, O.M.I., and Timothy Matovina have alerted us to the drama of Catholicism's movement north from Mexico and the Caribbean, there still remains a serious lag in the historical awareness of U.S. Catholics. They still talk and act as if the westward movement of English-speaking Catholicism is the main story. De Luna's work exemplifies research and writing that takes the northward movement of Catholicism seriously. She stresses the *Tejano* manifestation of this powerful and lasting trend. She suggests that the faith development of future Christians of Latino origin must build on the *mestizo* spirituality that emerged in the Borderlands centuries ago. It has some unique strengths, not the least of which is a profound expressiveness and beauty that spontaneously and naturally takes the form of drama, music, dance, spectacle and graphic art. As such, Latino Catholicism reinforces the particular strength of the Catholic tradition with its age-old emphasis on sacrament, symbol and rite.

Of particular note is De Luna's integration of the Guadalupe phenomenon into this study. She shows how that particular devotion is the most expressive of a rich Latino/Latina religious orientation and how it must play a central role in religious education of Latino/Latinas. Also worth noting is the poignant sharing of how the popular religious orientation has affected the author's own life, her struggles and those of her family.

One concern of this reviewer relates to De Luna's portrayal of the historical development of catechesis

in Latin America. It is helpful to note what Orlando Espín, others and I have noted about the late application in the Spanish colonies of the Council of Trent's standardizing norms. That fact helps explain the basically medieval, pre-Columbian and baroque spirit of Latino religion. It took root before the "modern" standardizations of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. What that means is that Latino Catholicism continues to be deeply rooted in its inspiration and somewhat intractable. This point could engage and nuance De Luna's treatment of *mestizo* spirituality and its aesthetic rather than doctrinal or moral orientation. All in all, this work is an important contribution to a wider and more solid appreciation of the challenges facing religious educators in the task of forming tomorrow's Catholic leaders, who in the majority will be Latino/Latinas.

— Allan Figueroa Deck, S.J.

John MacMurray: A Biography, by John E. Costello. Floris Books: Edinburgh. 2002. 445 pp. \$30.00.

When the Scottish Protestant philosopher John MacMurray (1891-1976) died, his obituary in the University of Edinburgh Journal was written by a former student, James Mitchell. The pupil befittingly honored his mentor by describing him as an unforgettable academic guide and a distinctive thinker. MacMurray "sounded" like an idealist, said Mitchell, but he was always grounded in concrete action. MacMurray's ideas provide good support for what subsequent liberation theologians mean when they speak of "praxis" — the creative integration of reflection and action.

John E. Costello S.J., MacMurray's biographer, formerly the president and a continuing faculty member of Regis College in Toronto — also director of the Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice in that city — mirrors the high regard of Mitchell, describing his subject as "the best kept secret of British philosophy in the twentieth century." This extensive biography ably portrays a prolific and visionary scholar who, while considering himself a Christian, did not defer to church doctrines and institutions. Costello focuses primarily on the story and charts the development of MacMurray's thought over a sixty-year period. This book is obviously a labor of love. The author, who is

quite willing to leave a good deal of critical assessment to others, concludes that MacMurray's thoughtful and unpretentious work still awaits the recognition it deserves.

Costello's interest in MacMurray began close to the time of his subject's death, almost three decades ago. In researching the book, he had access to MacMurray's papers and some of his voluminous correspondence because — at the time of each vocational transition in his life — many of the letters were systematically destroyed. To enhance his written sources, the author had access to the unpublished memoirs of MacMurray's widow Betty, as well as to related writings of other colleagues and friends. The resulting product reflects that personal engagement.

Costello takes his readers on a guided tour of the extensive intellectual projects of a man who was ahead of his time, a post-modernist, and who engaged many questions of human development with verve and insight. For MacMurray, human reason is not merely intellectual. It includes feeling and action along with thinking (he called it emotional rationality). He sought to integrate private and public ethics and discovered that the personal relationship he shared with his wife Betty gave him moral insights into larger world issues.

He sought to build a conceptual basis for dialogue between Western science, art and religion and envisioned a new convergence of science with faith after a long separation from their common Christian roots. He believed Western thought must transcend the view that the individual in society is primary. He built a sound intellectual foundation for viewing the world as a global community.

MacMurray's insights into the meaning of love embodied in personal relationships and his questioning of the values of duty and service were often misunderstood. Nevertheless, the core of his opus is a creative, prophetic gift from a genius who has remained relatively unnoticed.

Costello chose to sculpt his lengthy chapters around the stages of MacMurray's career. The resulting story could probably have been told in a shorter book, and with similar effect. Yet, the lessons to be learned here are worthy. This book, like its subject, resembles the biblical treasure hidden in a field, just waiting to be discovered and savored.

— Wayne A. Holst

Finding Peace, by Jean Vanier. Toronto, Canada: Anansi, 2003, 87 pp. \$14.95.

A Toronto teacher involved in interfaith work told me recently she had given away her fifth copy of *Finding Peace* "because the book is about what I believe deeply — that we must come to know one another. That's what will bring peace to our world." This is a central aspect of Jean Vanier's message in this compact and timely little book. But he emphasizes that there is a challenging path to self-knowledge if we are to gain the self-acceptance and openness essential for truly welcoming people of other religions and cultures.

Vanier is increasingly recognized as a prophet and social visionary. Often these days he poses the question, what does it mean to be "fully human" — free, compassionate and able to receive the gift of others in our sometimes painful diversity? An optimist, Vanier insists people can grow and change — and that if we are to be peacemakers, we must believe this about one another.

Vanier is a scion of Canada's best-loved "first family." Raised by devout Catholic parents who had a profound commitment to public service (both Pauline and former Canadian Gov. Gen. Georges Vanier have been touted for beatification). In his 20s, Jean resigned a naval commission to study philosophy at the Sorbonne in Paris. He taught at the University of Toronto and returned to France. Troubled by the dehumanizing institutionalization of people with developmental disabilities, he purchased, in 1964, a small house in the village of Trosly-Breuil and welcomed two men from an institution to live with him. He called the house "L'Arche," after Noah's ark. It was to be a place of shelter and community, a small sign of hope, founded on the spirit of the beatitudes and the conviction that every person, regardless of ability, is blessed with important gifts for others. Today, there are 120 L'Arche communities on five continents. Pope John Paul II has described L'Arche as "a dynamic and providential sign of the civilization of love." Vanier also co-founded Faith and Light, today a supportive network of 1,400 groups in seventy-eight countries for families of people with developmental disabilities.

With the simplicity of the profoundly wise, Vanier has "walked the walk" with some of the most marginalized people of the world for the past forty years. He also has moved in the company of world leaders. He is increasingly recognized for his spiritual and humanitarian contribution — he has received

the highest civic awards in Canada and France (Companion of the Order of Canada and the French Legion of Honour), the Pope Paul VI prize, the W. Gunther Plaut award from the largest Jewish Reform temple in Canada and, this year in June, in Missouri, the International Peace Award.

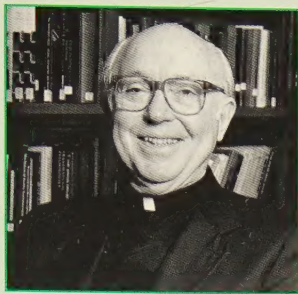
Vanier addresses how we live in the here and now. Always his call is to live our lives in greater truth. "We become peacemakers as we let ourselves be disarmed." Peace in our world begins with peace among us, and that is contingent upon our willingness to face our fears and prejudices and grow in personal integration. As we traverse "The Barriers Within Us" we will be able to traverse "The Barriers Among Us" (titles of two of the book's central chapters).

Many fine practitioners have written about emotional and spiritual growth. What makes this book unique is its absence of psychological jargon or theorizing and its quality of personal authority. Vanier writes from his own inner journey, making reference to his struggles with the anguish and the violence that can rise up in one when confronted with the anguish of others; he draws from his broad experience of people and of our global society. Often he refers to writers and places that inspire him — Buber, King, Ignatieff, Ghandi, Etty Hillesum and, for instance, the Corrymeela community in Northern Ireland.

When overwhelmed, Vanier turns to those he calls "prophets of peace" — usually unknown people who "have made the long journey to self-acceptance and purification, recognizing what is sacred and universal. . . . They nourish hope and love in individual hearts." Some of these people dwell in L'Arche — little people who have the capacity to welcome others. Humble and forgiving because they have learned to accept, they heal us of our compulsion to compete. We ourselves become prophets of peace when we accept our weakness. "Here," says Vanier, "we are touching a mystery....Peace comes from the power that flows from the deepest, and most vulnerable part of our being, a power of gentle and strong life."

Finding Peace is the distilled wisdom of a lifetime of a man whom some describe as a living saint, though Vanier abhors such language. Approaching 75, Vanier witnesses to the possibility of continued growth throughout our lives. His message has become more and more universal in recent years, and his books have become best-sellers — the immensely popular *Becoming Human* (the 1998 CBC Massey Lectures, prepared for a secular audience), and now this little gem, really a sustained essay, which draws at times on the Christian story. It will bear re-reading and considerable reflection.

— Beth Porter, M.A., M. Div.



In Memoriam

GILL, Rev. James J., S.J., M.D. — In Scottsdale, AZ, on Tuesday, July 29, 2003, at age 78, after a long bout with cancer. A Jesuit for 56 years and a priest for 46 years, Jim, son of James J. Gill, professor at the University of San Francisco, and Veronica (Foye) Gill, was born in Tacoma, WA, on May 31, 1925. He attended St. Ignatius High School, San Francisco, graduating in 1942. His college years at the University of San Francisco were interrupted by service during World War II as a Naval aviation navigator, 1943-46. Returning to USF, he completed his pre-med degree before entering the Jesuit novitiate at Los Gatos, CA, in August of 1947. Philosophy studies were taken at Mount St. Michael's in Spokane, and then he taught English for a year at Loyola University in Los Angeles before starting theological studies at Alma College, Los Gatos, in 1954. He was ordained to the priesthood in San Francisco on June 15, 1957. Jim was long interested in psychiatry with the intention of assisting priests and men and women religious. He studied medicine at Marquette University Medical School, where he received his M.D. in 1963. He then did his internship at Sacred Heart Hospital, Spokane. From 1964-67 he did his psychiatric residency at the Institute of Living, Hartford, CT, under Dr. Francis Braceland. This was followed by a fellowship at Harvard University, 1967-69, under the direction of Drs. Dana Farnsworth and Graham Blaine. He received high praise from his mentors at both places, Dr. Braceland noting that Jim "endeared himself to the whole organization. He is a first-class physician and has the makings of an excellent psychiatrist." Upon the completion of his fellowship in 1969, Jim remained at Harvard University Health Services as a psychiatrist, a post he held until 1994. During this time he established himself as a noted lecturer and consultant as well as a practitioner. In 1989 he returned to the Institute of Living in Hartford as psychiatrist and senior consultant to the Retreat Service Unit, assisting priests, religious, and other professionals. He continued there as a part-time consultant until the time of his death. In 1994 Jim established the Christian Institute for the Study of Human Sexuality, "CISHS," a program designed to offer academic preparation from a Christian perspective in the area of sexuality and skills related to counseling about sexual matters as they pertain to religious formation and clerical celibacy. Fr. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, Superior General of the Jesuits, described the venture as being "very much in the best tradition of the Society of Jesus... and a much needed pilot project for similar ventures in other countries and continents." Due to Jim's illness, the Institute closed in November 2002. Its work has been taken on by Hekima

College, the Jesuit School of Theology, located in Nairobi, Kenya, under the auspices of Angelo D'Agostino, S.J., M.D. Jim was also a highly regarded author and editor. In 1979 he and his colleague, Linda Amadeo, established the Jesuit Education Center for Human Development in Cambridge, MA, to publish the journal HUMAN DEVELOPMENT. This quarterly publication brings together the insights of theology, spirituality and the social sciences to assist church leaders in the work of renewal. In the words of former New England Province Provincial and prolific author, Bill Barry, S.J., "Jim's dream and God's meshed well enough for the journal to thrive and to influence the lives of countless bishops, priests, and religious in its short history." Jim remained Editor-in-Chief until the spring of this year. The publication continues under the auspices of Regis University, Denver, CO. Jim was a member of numerous professional organizations and served on many educational and medical boards as trustee, adviser or board member, including the University of San Francisco, Regis University, and the Institute of Mental Health, St. John's University, Collegeville, MN. While on the board of trustees at the University of San Francisco, Jim developed a close friendship with Meyer Friedman, M.D., who with Ray Rosenman, M.D., coined the term "Type A behavior." In 1976, Dr. Friedman invited Jim to be part of a project to help heart attack victims avoid a recurrence by changing their Type A behavior. Once a month for the past 25 years, Jim worked with a leadership team in San Francisco that monitors the progress of heart attack victims in the program. Jim saw his work in terms of "conversion," helping people to come "to full maturity in the likeness of Jesus Christ... We can help people to undergo a conversion to become like Jesus, or a conversion from adolescence into adulthood, or a conversion physically to better health." He saw his role as helping individuals deliberately attempt to grow spiritually and relationally. Over the past few years Jim struggled with cancer which, despite various procedures and therapies, continued to weaken him. He is survived by Dan and Mary Jennings, sister (Houston, TX) and Laurance and Marcille Gill, brother (Martinez, CA). A Mass of the Resurrection was on Friday, August 15, at St. Ignatius Church, San Francisco. Committal followed at Santa Clara Mission Cemetery, Santa Clara, CA. Memorial donations can be sent to Father D'Agostino, S.J., M.D., for the continuation of the CISHS in Nairobi, Kenya, c/o HUMAN DEVELOPMENT, 1353 Boston Post Rd., Ste. 11, Madison, CT. 06443. Donations to HUMAN DEVELOPMENT magazine can be sent directly to Regis University, 3333 Regis Blvd., Denver, CO 80221.

Regis University

Ranked a top school for ninth consecutive year

For the ninth consecutive year, *U.S. News and World Report* has ranked Regis University a top school in the West. The magazine ranks universities and colleges throughout the country every year in its guidebook *America's Best Colleges*.

Regis jumped a spot to No. 24 in the West among its category of universities that offer a full range of undergraduate degrees and some master's degrees.

A key advancement for Regis came in the area of peer assessment, which is given the most weight in the ranking formula. This year, Regis earned a 3.0 score out of a possible 5.0. Peer assessment is based on surveys from top academics such as presidents, provosts and deans of admission, who rank schools on their academic programs, allowing such intangibles as faculty dedication to teaching to be included.

The ranking formula also looks at the freshman

retention rate and average graduation rate; faculty resources such as class size and student to faculty ratio; student selectivity, which includes SAT/ACT scores of enrolled students; financial resources such as average spending per student; and graduation rate performance.

Regis improved in most categories, including graduation rate of 54 percent (up from 52 percent last year); student to faculty ratio of 14:1 (up from 15:1 last year); and 49 percent of freshmen in the top 25 percent of their high school class (up from 47 percent last year). The University also advanced in the average alumni-giving rate, improving to 19 percent (from 18 percent last year) in that category, which is an indirect measure of satisfaction.

For more information about the rankings, visit the magazine's Web site at www.usnews.com.



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